



OPCW

Executive Council

Fiftieth Meeting
23 November 2015

EC-M-50/NAT.2
23 November 2015
ENGLISH only

TURKEY

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SADIK ARSLAN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY TO THE OPCW
AT THE FIFTIETH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,

First of all, I would like to express our appreciations to you and the Director-General for convening a special session of the Executive Council to consider the recent reports of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria.

I also would like to thank Mr Director-General for his update today.

On this occasion, I wish to commend Mr Director-General and the Technical Secretariat for their work and I would like to express our appreciation and support to the FFM for their strong commitment to the work of the OPCW and their dedication regarding the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

Today, once again, the Executive Council had to convene a special session to consider the recent three reports of the FFM in Syria.

These reports clearly suggest that toxic chemicals are constantly and systematically used as a weapon in Syria.

The Assad regime is still acting with impunity in Syria by continuous use of chlorine as a weapon against civilians. Moreover, major outstanding questions concerning the regime's declarations amplify our concerns about the possibility of even graver employment of chemical weapons against civilians in this country.

We wonder how long we will tolerate this state of impunity in Syria.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is a multilateral treaty and stipulates that each State Party must comply with its rules.

If we fail to hold a State Party accountable for the systematic violation of the Convention by using chemical weapons including chlorine against its own people, how could we possibly deter a non-State actor and other groups from employing such chemical weapons.



The FFM report on the incident in the Idlib province in March 2015 acknowledges that the Assad regime targeted its own people with one or more toxic chemicals, including chlorine, as a weapon. The FFM report indicates that helicopters were used during the attacks and the result of exposure was fatal in six cases in Sarmin and in two cases in Al-Nerab.

In this respect, in compliance with the latest FFM reports both on Idlib and Marea, Turkey believes that the OPCW-UN- Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) which became operational as of 13 November 2015, has a historic responsibility to find out the answers to the questions of who and why?

Undoubtedly, we will follow closely the work of the JIM which was established pursuant to the United Nations Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), to determine the perpetrators of chemical attacks in Syria.

Turkey strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons, as well as the toxic chemicals as a weapon in Syria, by anyone, be it a State Party or a non-State actor.

However, the Executive Council should remain focused on the Syrian file and continue to closely monitor the situation in this country until the international community has confidence that the regime in Syria has met its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

I would like to reiterate that any such use by anyone is a serious violation of international law and the entire international community has the responsibility to hold the perpetrators to account.

Lack of action and further delays against consistent non-compliance of the Assad regime, unfortunately, have strengthened the culture of impunity in Syria.

In this respect, we believe that the draft decision (EC-M-50/DEC/CRP.1, dated 20 November 2015) which is before us, will lead to a shift in the focus of the international community in determining the prime responsibility of the Assad regime for chemical weapons attacks.

The wording of the draft decision is quite “vague” and “soft” against the background of all the official reports and incidents since 2013 in Syria. This rather soft handling of the systematic use of chemical weapons will unfortunately harm the credibility of the Organisation.

The wording of the draft decision dilutes the main responsibility of the Assad regime and will further encourage the Assad regime and its accomplices on the ground to perpetrate new crimes.

This draft decision will give the wrong signal to the prime perpetrator of chemical weapons in Syria and will diminish the deterrence capacity of the OPCW and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The indiscriminate use of barrel, cluster and container bombs by the Assad regime continues undiminished. A recent aerial attack of the Assad regime with the help of a “major foreign power” on some villages on the Turkish border triggered a new influx of thousands of

refugees from Syria to the Turkish border, on top of the existing 2.3 million Syrian refugees that we already have.

Turkey believes that if the discrepancies of the Syrian file as were suggested in the reports of the Declaration Assessment Team are not clearly mentioned in the decisions of the Executive Council, the pressure for getting the Syrian regime to comply with the provisions of the Convention and the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions will quickly erode.

Moreover, the prime perpetrator of chemical weapons in Syria and violator of the United Nations Security Council resolutions pertaining to the Syrian file will further benefit from and capitalise on the vague language of the Executive Council decision that we are adopting today.

The language of the representative of the Syrian regime today, is a clear indication of the stimulated aggressiveness of the regime in reaction to our affectionate language in the face of their crimes.

I would like to request this statement be circulated as an official document of this meeting of the Executive Council and be posted on the website and external server.

Thank you.

- - - 0 - - -