



OPCW

Executive Council

Fiftieth Meeting
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LUXEMBOURG

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PIERRE-LOUIS LORENZ
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF LUXEMBOURG TO THE OPCW AT THE
FIFTIETH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Albania, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement. Andorra and San Marino also associate themselves with this statement.

At the outset I would like to thank the Director-General for his statement, which as always provides useful information for our work. I also wish to reiterate our appreciation to him and to the OPCW staff for their commitment to the work of the organization and to their efforts regarding the ongoing Syrian CW operation and the FFM and DAT staff in particular.

It is much regrettable that once again the Executive Council had to convene to discuss the findings of the FFM as related in its recent three reports. In this respect, the EU remains very concerned about the fact that the FFM has acknowledged the continuous use of chemical weapons or toxic chemicals used as a weapon. As in the previous three FFM reports which have been issued during 2014, we have not failed to observe that the Fact-Finding Mission, on the basis of analysis of information and evidence available to it, has concluded that the alleged incidents in the Idlib province in March 2015 likely involved the use of one or more toxic chemicals- including chlorine- as a weapon. All indications, such as the presence of helicopters, mentioned once again in this report, point again to the fact the Syrian Government has attacked with chemicals its own citizens. The report states that the outcome of exposure was fatal in eight cases. The use of chlorine thus follows a continued pattern: four (out of six) FFM reports focus on the use of chlorine in the Syrian Arab Republic in 2014 and 2015. As these findings point at a State Party of the Chemical Weapons Convention, it is even more important that this Executive Council, as it previously did by condemning the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic in its decision dated 4 February 2015, shows once again that it takes its responsibility and lives up to the expectations of the international community.



Furthermore, the FFM was able to confirm with utmost confidence that during an incident in the town of Marea, close to Aleppo on 21 August 2015, at least two people were exposed to sulfur mustard, and that it is likely that the effects of this chemical weapon resulted in the death of an infant. In its report regarding information provided by the Syrian Government on an incident in Jobar on 29 August 2015, on the basis of available evidence, the FFM team cannot confidently determine whether or not a chemical has been used as a weapon. Investigations concerning other incidents continue, which will likely result in other reports. In this respect, the EU welcomes the draft decision (EC-M-50/DEC/CRP.1, dated 20 November 2015) that is before us, and hopes that it will be adopted by consensus.

The EU strongly believes that use of chemical weapons by anybody, anywhere and under any circumstances is abhorrent and must be rigorously condemned. In this vein, the EU supported the Executive Council decision at its Forty-Eighth Meeting and welcomed United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015) which condemned the use of chlorine as a chemical weapon in the Syrian Arab Republic as a violation of the United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) and of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The EU also welcomes the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 2235 (2015) setting up a Joint Investigative Mechanism to identify, in close cooperation with the FFM, perpetrators of chemicals attacks in the Syrian Arab Republic. The adoption of this resolution constitutes an important step against impunity and a deterrent to discourage the use of chemicals as a means of warfare. The EU remains determined to ensure that those responsible for these horrific acts are properly identified and held to account. Any future use must trigger Chapter VII measures under the United Nations Charter.

In the light of the above, it is of crucial importance that the work of the FFM continues. The EU fully supports the decision of the Director-General to have the FFM continue its work as long as necessary. It is also important that the Director-General continues to brief the United Nations Security Council on the findings of the FFM in coordination with the United Nations Secretary-General as necessary and in line with the Executive Council's decision of February 2015 and United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015). I would be remiss if, at this point, I did not stress the professionalism and commitment of the staff working within the FFM. We look forward to the next reports of the FFM on allegations of use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. In this respect, we call on all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic to extend their full cooperation to the FFM and to ensure that it can carry out its work in a safe, independent and effective manner.

We also welcome the continuing work of the OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team and look forward to their report covering their most recent, 12th, visit to the Syrian Arab Republic. We remain concerned that outstanding questions have yet to be adequately addressed by the Syrian regime. Serious discrepancies surround both declared and undeclared stockpiles and production facilities. We expect the OPCW to investigate fully the inconsistencies in Syrian declarations. As long as questions remain on both the veracity of the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration and continuing use of chemical weapons, the Syrian Arab Republic cannot claim to be in full compliance with its obligations to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the United Nations and the international community.

The EU also seizes this opportunity to call on the Syrian Arab Republic to respect the Convention and fully meet all its obligations as specified in Article IV paragraph 16 of the Chemical Weapons Convention regarding the costs arising in connection with the elimination of its chemical weapons programme and the verification thereof. It is regrettable that the

Syrian Arab Republic has rejected the proposal on the use of the “frozen assets” and it is unacceptable for our Organisation to let a State Party seek any excuse to avoid facing its financial responsibilities.

Finally, I would like to inform that the EU is proceeding to important financial contributions to the dedicated Trust Funds established by the OPCW and by JIM in support of United Nations Security Council resolution 2235 (2015). We hope that these funds will be made available to both beneficiaries by the end of the year. It is also to be noted that several EU Member States are also proceeding to similar significant contributions.

In closing, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this meeting of the Council and be published on the OPCW website and extranet.

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