



OPCW

Executive Council

Fifty-Fourth Meeting
13, 19, and 20 April 2017

EC-M-54/NAT.11
13 April 2017
ENGLISH and FRENCH only

FRANCE

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MR PHILIPPE LALLIOT
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE TO THE OPCW AT
THE FIFTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

I align myself with the statement delivered this morning by the Ambassador of Malta on behalf of the European Union.

The circumstances under which we are meeting today call on a sense of responsibilities. We have been working together for several years towards one sole objective: to dismantle the Syrian chemical weapons programme and to eliminate any ability of the Syrian Army to carry out a chemical operation.

But the conclusion is sobering. We now know that the Syrian regime not only failed to declare the entirety of its chemical programme, and that it even continued to develop an autonomous chemical programme, but also that it continued to use chemical weapons against its own people.

In the coming weeks, our technical work should focus equally on these two aspects: the uses of chemical weapons documented by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), and the conclusions of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT).

I have no words to describe the horror of the attack that took place on 4 April. Men, women, and children suffocating, surrounded by powerless volunteers, who sprayed them with water in the hopes of saving them; children whose lips had turned blue, whose pupils had dilated, and who were seized by convulsions. This time the images were seen around the world, but we should think of all the previous times when it happened.

We impatiently await the conclusions of the FFM regarding the nature of the agent used and the exact circumstances of this attack. Still, the symptoms that could be seen from the images available to us lead us to believe that a powerful nerve agent was used, killing 86 people.

I have taken note of the request by the Russian and Syrian representatives for the establishment of another investigative mission. That proposal only serves to cloud our message, in a context where, on the contrary, we must show our unity. The independence and reliability of the FFM teams cannot be called into question.



The attack of 4 April must be examined against the backdrop of the Note you circulated to us, Mr Director-General, on 2 March 2017. You inform us that traces of four chemicals not declared by Syria in its initial declaration were found by the OPCW inspectors at the premises of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC). You conclude that the SSRC played a leading role in the development of the Syrian chemical programme, and recall your report of July 2016, in which you had already alerted us to the fact that the gaps and inconsistencies in the Syrian initial declaration did not allow you to verify that Syria has submitted a declaration that could be considered accurate and complete.

It seems to me, under the circumstances for which we are meeting here today, that we are within our right to question the link between the attack of 4 April, the chlorine attacks documented in the reports of the JIM, and the confirmation in your Note, Mr Director-General, that the Syrian Government at the very least lied about the nature of its chemical stockpile and, at worst, pursued an active chemical programme.

In an agreement in 2013 Syria committed to abandon its chemical programme, to destroy its stockpiles, and to no longer use these weapons. The sponsors of that agreement must assume their responsibilities and acknowledge that it was not respected. We must now recognise this fact and take action to ensure that such events never happen again, in Syria or elsewhere.

Other actors today feel free to use these weapons, be it Daesh in Syria and Iraq or the still unclear attack in Malaysia.

The existence of an undeclared chemical programme in Syria constitutes a threat to our global security.

The violation of the prohibition of chemical weapons by the Syrian Government—the breaking of this fundamental taboo—seriously undermines the non-proliferation regime that we have a responsibility to protect here in this room. Faced with such a stark challenge to the regime on the prohibition of chemical weapons, we have a shared interest in completing the dismantling of the Syrian chemical programme.

I call on all Member States of the Organisation to not politicise our discussion, which goes well beyond Syria alone: it goes to a system of collective security that we have built together throughout this century.

I regret that the United Nations Security Council failed to find the necessary consensus to adopt sanctions last February; perhaps we would have been able to avoid what happened at the beginning of this April. I also regret that the Security Council again failed last night to speak with one voice to condemn the attack on 4 April. The discussion must continue within this Council with this same objective: to dismantle the Syrian chemical programme to protect the chemical non-proliferation regime and, with it, all non-proliferation regimes.

Here, in The Hague, it is essential that the results of the FFM's work be submitted as quickly as possible, and that the JIM be able to address them as quickly as possible. The Council must meet again as soon as the FFM's results have been made available to the States Parties. This body has an essential responsibility and we must rise to the task at hand: that of a discussion that is, above all, technical, which will lead us to determine the conditions for the dismantling of the Syrian chemical programme.

You have, Mr Director-General, the full support of France in this demanding and necessary mission.

I ask that this statement be considered as an official document of this Fifty-Fourth Meeting of the Executive Council and that it be published on the website and servers of the Organisation.

Thank you.

--- 0 ---