



OPCW

Executive Council

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

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ENGLISH only

NEW ZEALAND

**STATEMENT BY MS ERIN MORRISS
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE FIFTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

Like others here today, New Zealand was appalled to learn of the chemical weapons attack in the Syrian Arab Republic on 4 April. Sadly, this attack represents yet another horrific chapter in the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in the Syrian Arab Republic. It is entirely appropriate that the Executive Council has been convened today to address this issue.

Last week's attack represents one of the single largest chemical weapons attacks carried out in the Syrian Arab Republic since it joined the Chemical Weapons Convention. New Zealand condemns this attack in the strongest possible terms. This incident was made all the more horrifying given the number of children killed and injured. We welcome the Fact-Finding Mission's urgent investigation into this atrocity and we look forward to receiving its report at the earliest possible opportunity. It is critical that the OPCW and the international community ensure that the perpetrators of this attack are held to account.

Madam Chairperson, the international community has borne witness to repeated chemical weapons attacks by the Syrian Government. The reports issued by the FFM and the Joint Investigative Mechanism make this very clear. That the Syrian Arab Republic has continued to use chemical weapons – and in the face of international condemnation - calls into question the very integrity of this Convention. Moreover, these actions are a flagrant breach of international law.

While New Zealand supports diplomatic efforts in the United Nations to address the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, the United States of America's airstrikes conducted last week were a direct consequence of the Syrian Arab Republic's continued, and illegal, use of chemical weapons against its own people.

Finally, Madam Chairperson, when this Council met in March, we along with others highlighted the need for the Syrian Arab Republic to fully implement and resolve all outstanding issues under Executive Council decision EC-83/DEC.5 (dated 11 November 2016). Last week's attacks have only served to underline the urgent need for the Syrian Arab Republic to work with the OPCW to fully implement the Executive Council decision. This organisation has repeatedly asked the Syrian Arab Republic to provide answers. These are long overdue. This Council must act firmly to ensure accountability, to



preserve the integrity of the Convention and this Organisation, and to prevent further such atrocities from occurring.

I ask that this statement be issued as an official document and posted on the OPCW's external server and public website.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

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