

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR PEEP JAHILO
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TO THE OPCW
AT THE 55TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
5 JULY 2017**



Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.
The candidate countries Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Norway, Ukraine and Georgia align themselves with this statement.
Andorra, Monaco and San Marino also associate themselves with this statement.

I seize this opportunity to congratulate the new Chair of the Executive Council Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal of Bangladesh and the other members of the Bureau of the Executive Council on the assumption of your duties and to assure you of our continuous support for your endeavours. The EU would also like to express appreciation for the work carried out by the former Chairperson Ambassador Melono of Cameroon and the former members of the Bureau of the Executive Council for their efforts and work. During your chairmanship, the OPCW was confronted with particular challenges. We would like to commend you for the outstanding way in which you dealt with these challenges as the Chair of this Council.

I would like to express our appreciation to the Director-General for his informative presentation as well as to the OPCW staff for their commitment in the face of yet another appalling development in this string of recent tragic events in Syria.

The EU regrets to be once again obliged to highlight a number of issues of vital importance to the implementation of the Convention and our shared determination to build a world free from chemical weapons.

The EU expresses its deepest concern regarding the findings of use of sarin in the recent FFM report on the attack in Khan Sheikoun in Idlib province on 4 April 2017, causing the death and injury of scores of civilians including children and relief workers. The FFM's report leaves no doubt whatsoever that sarin was used as a weapon in Khan Shaykhun. The EU fully supports the work of the OPCW and its FFM. We have the highest trust in their professionalism and independence.



The EU repeats its condemnation in the strongest terms of all use of chemical weapons in Syria. The OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) confirmed in its third and fourth report that the Syrian Arab Republic has used chemical weapons on three occasions in 2014 and 2015 and further confirmed that in its third report that ISIL has been involved in the use of mustard gas in one case in 2015. The EU reiterates that as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Syrian Arab Republic is explicitly obliged not to possess, develop or use chemical weapons. It is now proven that sarin has been used in the Khan Shaykhun attack. Syria has declared the production of sarin precursors, but is not able, among other issues, to credibly and scientifically explain the loss of tons of these precursors. It is evident that the continuing use of chemical weapons in Syria makes it all more important that Syria finally provides a comprehensive and complete declaration of its chemical weapons programme. Syria needs to provide clear, accurate and technically credible explanations of the gaps and inconsistencies identified by the Technical Secretariat, to enable it to confirm that all chemical weapons stockpiles have been fully declared and destroyed.

In this respect, the European Union fully supports the valuable work of the Declaration Assessment Team of the OPCW. This work must be continued in order to investigate the gaps and inconsistencies described in the DAT's previous reports so that this Council is able to understand the exact nature and dimension of the Syrian chemical programme, and ensure certainty that all its elements are finally destroyed.

Any use of chemical weapons – including the use of any toxic chemicals as weapons - is an abhorrent act which must be wholly condemned. The EU unequivocally condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, anytime, and under any circumstances, as a flagrant violation of international law. These heinous acts which are being carried out in Syria must stop and all perpetrators must be identified and held accountable for their violation of international law. The EU will continue to support the OPCW's work to investigate all credible allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria. The EU urges the JIM, in partnership with the FFM and, in conformity with its mandate, to promptly identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun, now that this use is confirmed. The EU expects that the JIM likewise pursues investigations on events in Um Housh on 16 September 2016.

The numerous reports on the use of chemical weapons in Syria since 2012 are disturbing. The global norm against chemical weapons must be continually reinforced if we are to achieve their full and lasting eradication, and so ensure tragedies such as in Khan Shaykhun will not be repeated.

Thank you Mr.Chairperson

