



**Statement by Ambassador Christoph Israng,
Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to the OPCW,
at the 55th -Meeting of the Executive Council**

5 July 2017

Mr Chairman, Mr Director-General, distinguished colleagues,

Thank you for giving me the floor. Germany fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Estonian delegation on behalf of the European Union.

I seize this opportunity to congratulate the new Chair of the Executive Council Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal of Bangladesh on the assumption of his duties. Mr Chairman, we assure you of our continuous support. I also thank the former Chairperson Ambassador Melono of Cameroon for her outstanding efforts and achievements in leading the Council in difficult times.

Please also allow me to thank the Director-General for his important work and able leadership. The report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria that we received last Thursday is yet another example of the outstanding work of the Technical Secretariat. Therefore the team of the Fact-Finding Mission deserves our full appreciation for their excellent work in challenging circumstances. It has carried out its work in strict compliance with its mandate.

Mr Chairman,

Let me clearly state from the outset: the report of the Fact-Finding Mission is extremely worrying. It permits only one conclusion: chemical weapons are still being used in Syria. The report of the FFM confirms our fears that children, women and men in the Syrian town of Khan Shaykhun fell victim to a Sarin gas attack. This is an act that plumbs the depths of cruelty. We express our deepest sympathy as we remember the victims of this chemical weapons attack.

Let me stress the fact that the thoroughness, detailedness and the methodology chosen in preparation of the report – especially with regard to the consistency of the evidence by cross-checking multiple sources, including the testimonies of various credible eyewitnesses – have unanimously led to convincing conclusions. The facts are compelling and deeply alarming.

It is therefore essential that we continue to support the FFM's investigation of all credible allegations of CW use, and call upon States Parties to provide the

Director-General with any relevant information with respect to all allegations within the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr Chairman,

Germany condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere and by anyone. This is one of the reasons why Germany is assisting all efforts to collect evidence of the most serious violations of human rights in Syria. We trust that the Executive Council will take a clear stance on this abhorrent violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Anyone who is responsible for such acts must be brought to justice. Impunity is not acceptable. Evidence provided points strongly towards the responsibility of the Syrian government. It is now up to the Joint Investigative Mechanism in accordance with its mandate to identify those responsible on the basis of the FFM report.

We cannot be silent on the events that happened on 4 April. This Council must take action. Expressing serious concern and pushing for full and effective co-operation to condemn this horrendous act is the least we have to do. In this regard, the French Ambassador will later make a statement on behalf of both the German and the French delegation.

Given the fact that chemicals continue to be used as weapons in Syria, it is outrageous that the Declaration Assessment Team is still not in a position to verify that the Syrian authorities have fully abandoned their chemical weapons programme. In fact, the latest DAT reports have lengthened the list of open issues, serious doubts and uncertainties. We call upon the Syrian Government to cooperate fully with the OPCW and to fulfill its international obligations under the Convention.

In closing, I would like to reiterate and recall the reason we are here in The Hague and in this building. We all have to focus on our core task at the OPCW: chemical disarmament and the prevention of the use of chemicals as weapons. Our utmost aim is to disarm all those in possession of CW and all those who use CW and by doing so to re-arm humanity.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.