

THE NETHERLANDS

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR PAUL WILKE ACTING PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

AT THE FIFTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 5 JULY 2017

Mr Chairperson,

My delegation thanks the Director-General for his statement and associates itself with the statement pronounced by the Permanent Representative of Estonia on behalf of the European Union.

Once again, the world finds itself confronted with the confirmed use of a chemical weapon in the Syrian Arab Republic. And this time it is not a crude device dispersing chlorine, but the far deadlier nerve agent sarin.

The report of the Fact Finding Mission (document S/1510/2017 of 29 June 2017) leaves no room for doubt about its conclusions. The report is detailed and describes the meticulous procedures followed by the FFM. We commend the FFM for the transparency with which the team operates and we thank the members of the Fact Finding Mission for their dedication and professionalism.

The use of sarin is a flagrant violation of the norms laid down in the Convention and of Security Council Resolution 2118. We condemn this in the strongest possible terms. It amounts to a war crime and those responsible must –and will- be held to account for their deeds.

The findings of the FFM-report will be transmitted to the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism and the Netherlands expresses the hope that the JIM shall be able to identify the perpetrators of this heinous act, so that they can be brought to justice.

The confirmation that sarin has been used in Khan Sheikhoun again highlights the importance that any doubts that remain about the veracity and completeness of the Syrian Initial Declaration be resolved as soon as possible. It is unacceptable that many doubts remain despite more than three years of intensive attempts by the Declaration Assessment Team to obtain clarification on the long list of outstanding issues.

The Syrian Arab Republic must give full disclosure about its chemical weapons programme, as required under the CWC, to enable the TS to verify that its chemical weapons programme has been completely dismantled and all chemical weapons stockpiles have been destroyed.

The horrific attack in Khan Sheikhoun is the latest demonstration of the inhumane character of the conflict in Syria and of the utter disregard for the principles of international humanitarian law and for the lives of civilians.

Thank you.

