



OPCW

Executive Council

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ENGLISH and FRENCH only

SWITZERLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR URS BREITER
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SWITZERLAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE FIFTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

First, allow me to welcome you as Chairperson of the Executive Council and to congratulate you on behalf of the Swiss delegation for your election to this post. I wish you every success in carrying out your work.

We should like to thank the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) for its thorough work, undertaken in difficult circumstances. Switzerland takes note of the publication of its report on the incident in Um-Housh on 16 September 2016 and its report regarding the attack of 4 April 2017 in Khan Shaykhun in the Syrian Arab Republic. The conclusions in that last report in particular are unequivocal and alarming.

Sarin or a substance similar to it was indeed used in the attack in Khan Shaykhun, killing more than 80 people and injuring several hundred others.

The conclusions of the report cannot be called into question, nor can the rigorous methods, independence of analysis, or impartiality of the FFM. Switzerland condemns, in the most absolute terms, the use of chemical weapons and stresses that they can never, under any circumstances, be used by the parties to a conflict.

Switzerland is pleased to note that the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) has actively resumed its work. It will now have to identify, without ambiguity, those responsible for this war crime, who must be brought to justice. We absolutely must put an end to this present climate of impunity. The JIM must also investigate other incidents of use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic which have been confirmed by the OPCW.

Switzerland would underscore once again that the continued and repeated use of chemical weapons undermines the longstanding norm against chemical weapons and weakens the integrity of the Convention. It calls on all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic to renounce the use of chemical weapons and to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

The members of this Organisation must take their responsibility and condemn, in the strongest possible terms, this unacceptable violation of international law and do everything in their power to put an end to this spiral. Thank you.

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