

NORWAY

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MARTIN SØRBY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NORWAY TO THE OPCW AT THE FIFTY-EIGHT MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mister Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

A little over a year ago, Norway together with many other countries present in this room, in the strongest possible terms condemned the outrageous use of chemical weapons in the Khan Shaykhun area of Idlib province in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The world has stood unified in condemnation of chemical weapons since the atrocities of World War I. It is therefore appalling that, again, we have received reports on use of chemical weapons in the city of Douma in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The use of chemical weapons is a clear and serious violation of international law. The recent attack in Douma displays a flagrant disregard for humanitarian law. My government reiterates its position that impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity is unacceptable. The regime's repeated use of chemical weapons against its own population is in direct conflict with the Chemical Weapons Convention, OPCW Executive Council decisions and Security Council resolution 2118 mandating Syria to destroy its chemical weapons programme.

The Security Council has repeatedly emphasised that the use of chemical weapons in Syria poses a threat to international peace and security, and that the parties responsible must be held accountable.

It is highly regrettable that the UN Security Council is paralysed on the question of chemical weapons in Syria. We regret that once again last week, Russia vetoed the establishment of an independent investigative mechanism to identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria, a proposed resolution that was co-sponsored by Norway.

On the way forward, we call upon the government of the Syrian Arab Republic to constructively work with the OPCW Technical Secretariat to resolve all identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in its declaration. An accurate and complete declaration, in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, is paramount to end the ongoing use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Norway is satisfied that the Fact-Finding Mission is in the process of gathering and analysing information on this incident from all available sources and will report to this Council. Norway has full confidence in the impartiality, independence and the professionalism of the OPCW and the mission. We call on all parties to provide unfettered and safe access to all sites deemed relevant by the Fact-Finding Mission.

Finally, let me express Norway's support for the statement delivered by the Ambassador of Bulgaria on behalf of the European Union.

Thank you Mister Chairperson.