



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

Unofficial translation

**STATEMENT
BY THE HEAD OF THE RUSSIAN DELEGATION,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
TO THE OPCW, AMBASSADOR A.V.SHULGIN
AT THE 58TH MEETING OF THE ORGANISATION FOR THE
PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS (OPCW)
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

The Hague, April 16, 2018

Dear Mr. Chairperson,

We are gathered here today under extraordinary circumstances. In the night of April 14, without the authorization of the UN Security Council, an armed attack was carried out on a sovereign State, the Syrian Arab Republic, which is a member of our Organization. We consider it to be a perfidious act of aggression, a gross violation of the UN Charter and of the fundamental norms of international law. We regard the actions of the United States, the United Kingdom and France as an attempt to disrupt a peaceful settlement in Syria, to destabilize the situation in this region even further. We strongly condemn the attack carried out by the so-called Western coalition. Such a crime cannot be justified.

From the military point of view, the success of this widely advertised by Western countries "retaliation" for the alleged use of chemical weapons by the "Assad regime" seems very doubtful. According to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation most of the missiles fired at Syria were shot down by the Syrian air defense system. So, the triumphant statements heard from Washington, London and Paris regarding their massive and successful attack on Syria are nothing but an absolute lie.

This regrettable development, however, did not come as a surprise to us in view of the rhetoric of Western leaders and in the first place President Donald Trump these days. Just as we had warned, the staged use of chemical weapons was used as a pretext for this military adventure. Last year's scenario regarding the incident in Khan Shaykhun was repeated.

Long before April 7, when the mass throw of the reports on the use of poisonous substances in Douma took place, the Syrian authorities, as well as the Russian military forces, repeatedly warned about the preparation of the future provocation in Eastern Ghouta aimed against the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

This information was brought by the Syrians and by us to the attention of both the UN Security Council and the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

It was obvious that before the final defeat in Eastern Ghouta the terrorist groups operating there would use any possible means in order to try to tarnish the Syrian government. Especially as they were 100 percent sure that any provocation on their part would be welcomed and supported by the capitals of states opposing the official Damascus.

Everything went in accordance with the script which had been prepared in Washington. There is no doubt that the US play a leading role in this. Once the "White Helmets" had made their fake reports from Douma, the United States, the United Kingdom, France and some other countries immediately attacked the Syrian authorities with their accusations. Resonant statements were made at the high political level that there was reliable evidence that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic had committed another crime in its own territory against its own people, and that it cannot remain unpunished.

Directors of this show were not even confused by the absurdity of the situation: Eastern Ghouta had been almost liberated; in Douma an arrangement with the remaining groups of militants had been achieved to organize a safe humanitarian corridor so that they and their families could leave Douma for Idlib province. Then we heard a worldwide shout that the Syrian forces were dropping chlorine bombs or a kind of munitions with chlorine and sarin at civilians and hospitals in practically liberated Douma. Such statements are absolutely senseless. What was the reason for the Syrian government to use chemical weapons when the outcome of the military confrontation in Douma was evident? Did it really want to incur the anger of the international community? Such an idea may come to mind only of an insane person. Nevertheless these statements were disseminated at the highest political level and in all seriousness repeated in some capitals.

Shortly after the liberation of Douma the experts from the Russian Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) Protection Troops, accompanied by the Russian Military Police Forces, visited sites where - according to some NGO's reports - alleged use of chemical weapons took place. They visited a hospital that was mentioned in such reports. I would like to stress that those collected samples at the sites, visited the hospital, interviewed its patients were the high professionals and world-class experts. Thus according to investigation, I underscore, our national investigation, no evidence of chemical weapon attack in Douma has been found. There were no witnesses, no victims with symptoms of chemical poisoning in the hospital. No remains of the chemical weapons munitions were discovered. At the same time we have managed to locate participants of the staged footage that had been presented as the "evidence" of the chemical attack. The live interview with these people was shown on the television. They themselves showed shots with them at the staged video. Both of them are qualified physicians and work at the medical emergency service in Douma.

That is why we can say we have compelling evidence - it's not just "highly likely" as our western partners keep saying - that there was no incident involving chemicals in Douma on April 7 at all. It was nothing but a planned provocation of the United Kingdom Secret Service, and perhaps with the participation of their senior allies from Washington, in order to deceive the international community and justify their aggression against Syria.

Actual perpetrators of this provocation were pseudo-humanitarian NGOs which are nourished by the opponents of the official Damascus. Among them is the notorious "White Helmets" organization that is highly praised by some delegations here. We have said it more than once and we reiterate it now that this organization is sponsored by the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and some other countries. These paid agents, actors, depicting extras when it is needed. For money from Western countries they prepare staged videos, disseminate photos with a story they are really fond of - "suffering children - victims of Assad bloody regime".

We would like to show to the delegations photos where actors involved in the footage suddenly resurrect and seem to be safe and sound. It's disgusting that children are involved in these performances. Have a look at it and you will see what dirty methods are used by these so-called "humanitarian organizations". Also we would like to ask a question, how much did our so-called partners in the OPCW pay for the staged provocation called "the chemical weapon attack in Douma April 7"?

Dear Mr. Chairperson,

We are outraged that the act of aggression by "Three States" claimed to be a "response to the use of chemical weapons in Douma" was committed at the time when the OPCW inspectors were to arrive in Syria to clarify all the circumstances of the incident in Douma. It means that the United States, the United Kingdom and France are not interested in an objective investigation at all. As we can see, they do not need an objective investigation. They blamed the Syrian authorities in advance, even without waiting for the OPCW Facts-finding mission (FFM) to start its work in Syria.

Questions arise: Why are we here today? Why was this session convened by our Western partners, who - without any conclusions of the OPCW Technical Secretariat - have already made their decisions? What was this tragicomedy for? The FFM is still working on establishing the truth.

We believe that in the light of the recent attack on Syria, the work of the OPCW inspectors in Douma is becoming even more relevant. We insist on the need to complete their work as soon as possible and to present their conclusions to the OPCW Member States.

In this context we are proposing that a decision be taken at this Executive Council meeting supporting the FFM work (the draft has been submitted). Let's put aside

our differences and reaffirm our joint intention to facilitate the work of the OPCW experts in Syria.

On Saturday during the special UNSC meeting convened by the Russian Federation to discuss the extraordinary situation around Syria the Permanent Representative of the United States Nikki Haley accused our country of waging a disinformation campaign related to the incident in Douma on April 7.

I responsibly state: it is the US that that have been disseminating disinformation. One recent example. On April 14 the Pentagon Chief Spokesperson Dana White said at the press-conference that “the OPCW has been blocked from entering Ghouta and Douma, that’s because of Assad regime”. That is a total lie. If someone has doubts let’s ask Director General A.Uzumzu, if that’s true.

This mission, I recall, was dispatched with the consent of the Syrian authorities, which had expressed their readiness to provide the OPCW experts with all kinds of assistance, including safety and security of the inspection team. The Russian Federation, in its turn, has also offered every support to the OPCW Technical Secretariat in carrying out this mission. Given the fact that the Russian Military Police Forces are deployed in Douma we have an opportunity to ensure security in those areas where the OPCW inspectors will work. Of course, we will not impose this aid. The mission should do its work impartially. This assistance relates to the security, since the area has been for a long time under control of terrorist groups. This should be borne in mind and every effort should be made to ensure that the FFM carries out its work without any obstacles.

We express our deep appreciation to the Director General as well as the FFM team, who despite the extraordinary situation in Syria which was triggered by the military aggression of the “three states”, are going to fulfill their work related to the fact-finding in Douma.

Thus, this extraordinary situation around Syria goes in line with the disastrous course pursued by the United States and its closest allies in the OPCW over the past few years. Today we have witnessed an abhorrent performance: the delegations of the United States, the United Kingdom and France have, without blinking an eye, proclaimed themselves the guardians of international law, justifying thereby their aggression. In fact, except for a group of their allies, blindly drifting in the wake of even most reckless adventures of Washington, no one doubts: the main threat to peace comes from these leaders of the Western camp. May they not brag about their numerical superiority in the Executive Council. The vast majority of the States would not be deceived by this cunning arithmetic. We are confident that in the coming days more and more sober-minded people will close ranks to counter the irresponsible, cynical and completely deceitful policy of Washington and the countries lagging behind.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson,

Please circulate this statement as an official document of this OPCW Executive Council session.