



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

Fifty-Eighth Meeting  
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ENGLISH and FRENCH only

**SWITZERLAND**

**STATEMENT BY NADINE OLIVIERI LOZANO  
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SWITZERLAND TO THE OPCW AT  
THE FIFTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

**UNDER AGENDA ITEM 3  
ALLEGED USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS IN THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC**

Mr Chairperson,

Allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic have not ceased; on the contrary, a continuous intensification of hostilities has taken place in recent weeks in the Syrian Arab Republic, with dramatic humanitarian consequences in Eastern Ghouta.

Switzerland calls upon all States involved to take measures towards de-escalation. The international community must make every effort within multilateral fora to achieve tangible progress towards a lasting solution to this crisis and the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Swiss Government is gravely concerned about reports that chemical weapons have been used in the town of Douma. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that around “500 patients presented to health facilities exhibited signs and symptoms consistent with exposure to toxic chemicals. 43 of the 70 reported deaths relate to symptoms consistent with exposure to highly toxic chemicals.”

We emphasise once again that any use of chemical weapons is contrary to international law and prohibited under all circumstances. Unfortunately, Mr Chairperson, the ban on the use of chemical weapons has been undermined by their repeated use in the Syrian conflict and elsewhere. The international community must provide a strong and collective response to the intolerable weakening of existing standards and norms. In this regard, the OPCW plays a central role in ensuring respect for the provisions established by the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Switzerland thanks the Director-General for his presentation and commends his decision to promptly deploy a Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to Douma. It is crucial that the team is granted immediate and unrestricted access to all sites in order to conduct its investigation and shed light on the incident.

We reiterate our full confidence in the work of the Technical Secretariat, which has consistently conducted its missions in a professional and impartial way and in full respect of its mandate. The engagement of the OPCW in the context of the FFM, the Declaration



Assessment Team (DAT) and the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) has clearly demonstrated the importance of its investigative know-how. Switzerland is of the view that these capabilities need to be further developed. It is essential for current and future tasks of the Organisation that the investigative capacity of the Technical Secretariat is strengthened and expanded in a sustainable manner.

A year has passed since the sarin attack on Khan Shaykhun. Given that the Security Council has failed to renew the JIM's mandate, we must take urgent steps to establish a new attributive mechanism to investigate cases of confirmed chemical weapons use.

Without attribution, there is no accountability. And without accountability, impunity prevails. Every breach of the norm shatters the credibility of the Chemical Weapons Convention as an essential pillar of international law and the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It is our collective responsibility as parties to this Convention to fight against the erosion of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Thank you.

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