



OPCW

Executive Council

Fifty-Eighth Meeting
16 April 2018

EC-M-58/NAT.15
16 April 2018
ENGLISH only

BULGARIA

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR KRASSIMIR KOSTOV
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
TO THE OPCW AT THE FIFTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The candidate countries Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Georgia and Ukraine align themselves with this statement. San Marino also associates herself with this statement.

We thank the Director-General H.E. Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü for his introductory statement and the prompt reaction to the reports of the latest chemical attack. We commend the deployment of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to Douma within the shortest possible time. We reiterate our appreciation to the Director-General and to the OPCW staff for their commitment to the goals and work of the Organisation often in particularly challenging circumstances.

The European Union (EU) fully supports the FFM's work on the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and of the Declaration Assessment Team examining the gaps and discrepancies in the Syrian declarations.

The EU will spare no effort in support of a peaceful solution to the Syrian conflict. A lasting peace in a democratic Syrian Arab Republic is the ultimate objective of the EU.

On 14 April 2018, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini made the following declaration on behalf of the European Union:

“The European Union reiterates its strongest condemnation of the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime, as confirmed by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and as reported continuously in recent months in eastern Ghouta and other areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, including the most recent reports of a devastating chemical attack on Douma”.



In this context, the EU was informed about targeted American, French and British airstrikes on chemical weapons facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic, these specific measures having been taken with the sole objective to prevent further use of chemical weapons and chemical substances as weapons by the Syrian regime to kill its own people.

The EU is supportive of all efforts aimed at the prevention of the use of chemical weapons. It finds it deeply shocking that the international community is still confronted with the use of chemical weapons, as confirmed by the FFM. The reports of the Declaration Assessment Team show that the Syrian declaration cannot be fully verified as accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Accountability is a must. The use of chemical weapons or chemical substances as weapons is a war crime and a crime against humanity. Perpetrators will be held accountable for this violation of international law. Therefore, the EU deeply regrets that the mandate of the JIM, established by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2235 (2015) to identify perpetrators of chemical attacks, has not been renewed in November 2017. In this respect, it is highly regrettable that the UNSC has so far failed to adopt a strong resolution re-establishing an independent attribution mechanism to ensure accountability for perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in the Syrian Arab Republic

In July 2017 and in March 2018, the EU imposed additional restrictive measures on Syrian high-level officials and scientists for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons and is always ready to consider imposing further measures as appropriate.

The EU calls upon all countries, notably the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran, to use their influence to prevent any further use of chemical weapons, notably by the Syrian regime, and supports the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

The EU reiterates that there can be no other solution to the Syrian conflict than political. We have a common goal in preventing any escalation of violence that could transform the Syrian crisis into a wider regional confrontation, with incalculable consequences for the Middle East and indeed the whole world. The EU calls upon all parties to the conflict, especially the regime and its allies, to implement immediately the ceasefire, and to ensure humanitarian access and medical evacuations as unanimously agreed in the UNSC Resolution 2401. The EU repeats that any sustainable solution to the conflict requires a genuine political transition in line with the UNSC Resolution 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué negotiated by the Syrian parties within the United Nations-led Geneva process.

The Second Brussels Conference on the Syrian Arab Republic which will be held on 24-25 April 2018, co-chaired by the EU and the United Nations, will be the opportunity for the entire international community to relaunch its consistent support for the political process and commit new pledges to help the main victims of this ongoing conflict, namely the Syrian people inside and outside the Syrian Arab Republic.”

I would kindly ask that this statement be issued as an official document and placed on the OPCW public website.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.