



OPCW

Executive Council

Fifty-Eighth Meeting

16 April 2018

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ENGLISH and FRENCH only

BELGIUM

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN LEPAGE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BELGIUM TO THE OPCW
AT THE FIFTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

Thank you for having called this Fifty-Eighth Meeting of the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”). I must also thank the Director-General for having dispatched the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to Douma, as well as for his presentation this morning on the extremely disturbing information on the events in this Syrian town, on 7 April 2018, hardly a week after the incident at Khan Shaykhun.

Belgium endorses the statement made by the Ambassador of Bulgaria to the OPCW on behalf of the European Union.

Unfortunately, the list of barbaric acts in the Syrian conflict is growing longer and longer. A whole range of war crimes has already been perpetrated, but it is the repeated use of chemical weapons which touches the very heart of our Organisation. The OPCW has to push back. Erosion of the law against use of chemical weapons cannot be left without consequence. In this context, the military action by the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and France last week-end was appropriate. This targeted operation was designed to put an end to the Syrian regime’s chemical attacks against its own population.

Beyond that action, one must be sure that justice is done. The indiscriminate chemical weapons attacks are part of the lengthy list of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed on Syrian soil. The ICC must be seized of this. The authors of these acts and their accomplices must be pursued and must answer for their actions. Belgium is, moreover, of the view that the relevant information obtained by the OPCW ought to be able to be shared with the impartial, independent international Mechanism, charged with facilitating enquiries into the most serious violations of international law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic. These do not concern only the chemical attacks perpetrated by government forces, but also those attributed to Daesh.

The Syrian conflict cannot be solved only by military methods. The Syrian regime must stop all chemical attacks immediately. It must brook no more delays in clarifying all the questions asked by the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) and studied by the Declaration Assessment Team. The Syrian regime must dismantle what is left of its chemical programme under the supervision of, and verification by, the Secretariat.



As for the Douma incident, we call upon all parties present there to cooperate fully with the investigation so that the FFM may conduct its work in a more profound manner.

Finally, Belgium would be grateful to the Director-General of the OPCW, as well as to the Secretariat, to communicate to all the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention the final result of the FFM's enquiry as soon as it is available.

Please consider this statement as an official document of the Fifty-Eighth Meeting of the Council.

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