



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Twenty-Sixth Session
29 November – 3 December 2021

C-26/NAT.13
29 November 2021
ENGLISH only

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MARJOLIJN VAN DEELEN
SPECIAL ENVOY FOR DISARMAMENT AND NON-PROLIFERATION
AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES
UNDER AGENDA ITEM 9(D)**

Mr Chairperson,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union.

The Decision adopted by the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) suspending the voting rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic due to Syria’s failure to comply with the Convention is a strong message by the international community against impunity for the use of chemical weapons, and in defence of international law and international humanitarian Law.

The European Union welcomes the decision and considers it an appropriate response by the Conference of the States Parties to the clear violation of the core principles of the Convention by the Syrian Arab Republic. This decision comes eight years after the adoption of the United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) and is a consequence of the continued failure of the Syrian Arab Republic to fully declare and destroy its chemical weapons programme. In order to reverse the decision, the Syrian Arab Republic needs to resolve the pending issues, declare the full extent of its chemical weapons programme and return to full compliance with the Convention.

The Syrian regime’s failure to respect its international obligations under the Convention is substantiated through comprehensive and thorough investigations carried out by the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) as well as the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), Fact-Finding Missions (FFM) and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). The European Union strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force in Ltamenah in March 2017 and in Saraqib in February 2018, as concluded by the OPCW IIT reports.

The European Union commends the work of the Technical Secretariat on all aspects of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, including the confidential briefings to States Parties on their on-going work and working methods. We also commend the Director-General’s continuous efforts to engage with the Syrian Arab Republic, and we encourage the Syrian Arab Republic to constructively engage and ensure that progress is achieved, including on the question of the timely issuance of visas for OPCW staff, as there is no alternative to cooperation. Denying OPCW staff to access Syria obstructs the work of the Technical



Secretariat and its ability to implement its mandate and to deploy on the ground. This contravenes States parties' obligations under paragraph 7 of Article VII of the Convention. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to grant visas for all OPCW personnel in a timely manner, as required by the Convention and the United Nations Security Council resolution 2118.

The European Union looks forward to the continuation of the work of the IIT and the release of its next report and is determined to ensure full follow up of all findings. We have already imposed restrictive measures on 32 senior Syrian officials and scientists and two entities for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons in Syria. We are ready to consider introducing further measures as appropriate and will continue to work towards ensuring full accountability for those responsible for these egregious crimes.

The European Union and its Member States will continue to work at national and international levels in order to address chemical weapons attacks and other atrocities committed in the Syrian Arab Republic. The European Union also continues to support collective efforts to ensure accountability for perpetrators, including of chemical attacks through the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

I would kindly ask to consider this statement as an official document of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

- - - 0 - - -