



Statement by H.E Ambassador Kevin Kelly, Permanent Representative of
Ireland to the OPCW

At the Fifty-Fourth Meeting of the Executive Council

13 April 2017

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Mrs. Chairperson, Director-General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, Ireland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by Malta on behalf of the European Union.

I welcome the decision to convene this meeting of the Executive Council and would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Director-General and the staff of the OPCW for their continued professionalism and tireless commitment, which have been demonstrated once more following recent events in the Syrian Arab Republic. Ireland is deeply concerned about the allegations concerning the use of chemical weapons in an air strike in the Idlib province of Syria on April 4th and we look forward to the Director-General's report on this matter.

Ireland condemns in the strongest terms the reported use of chemical weapons in Syria and echoes what many delegations have stated here today: the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances must be rigorously condemned by the international community. We believe that those who are responsible for these reprehensible acts must be held accountable, for violations of international law cannot go unaddressed and unpunished. Ireland reiterates its call to refer possible war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

Ireland calls on Syria, a state party to the Chemical Weapons Convention since 2013, to meet its obligations under the convention without any further delay. We will continue to support the efforts and work of the OPCW, including the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), to investigate allegations of all chemical weapons attacks. We greatly appreciate that the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) has already started the necessary work of gathering and analysing information from all available sources regarding these most recent allegations.

Ireland welcomed the adoption by the Security Council of a resolution late last year to renew the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism. This year-long extension allows for a continuation of vital investigative work in a place where civilians have experienced first-hand the devastating effects of chemical weapons attacks by the Syrian regime, as identified in the third and fourth JIM Reports.

At the OPCW Conference of the States Parties in November last year, we requested that all stakeholders engage fully with the efforts of the FFM and the JIM, and that there are no attempts to hinder or delay the work of the Declaration Assessment Team. We underline the importance of this once more.

Ireland has been pleased to support the international community's efforts to remove and destroy the Syrian Government's declared stockpiles of chemical weapons. However, we continue to be disturbed by the evidence of the regime's use of such weapons and reiterate the EU call that those responsible should be sanctioned within the framework of the United Nations. The international community has clearly shown its commitment to assisting Syria in destroying its chemical weapon stockpiles. It now falls to the Syrian authorities to meet their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and to fully respect the decisions taken by the Executive Council.

It is utterly unacceptable that over a century after their first use, it seems these weapons are still being used to inflict such cruel harm on combatants, civilians, and most devastatingly, on children. The images and footage of innocent children suffering in the aftermath of these attacks cannot fail to leave a lasting imprint on those who view them. Ireland will continue to support the efforts of the OPCW in Syria and appreciates that the Director-General will keep the Executive Council updated as the investigation progresses.

I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this meeting of the Council.

Thank you.