



**STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
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AT THE 29th SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO THE
CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
(The Hague, 25 - 29 November 2024)**

Agenda item 9(d) - Addressing the threat from chemical weapons use - SAR

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

The Candidate Countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Türkiye and Ukraine as well as the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the EEA (European Economic Area) align themselves with this statement. Andorra, Monaco and San Marino also associate themselves with this statement.

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union deeply regrets the complete lack of progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme: more than a decade after Syria's initial declaration, 19 questions remain unresolved. It is even more concerning that two additional questions were recently opened, suggesting a potentially even more extensive Syrian chemical weapons programme than known so far. True cooperation is measured by providing complete and accurate declarations.

Syria must fully and effectively cooperate with the OPCW and all its established mechanisms, including the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). The OPCW reporting is a crucial contribution to efforts to end impunity for the use of chemical weapons and we look forward to the release of next IIT report. The EU rejects criticism of the IIT by certain States Parties that call its creation "illegal" or "illegitimate". We underline that majority voting is explicitly foreseen in the Convention if consensus is impossible to find. A State Party joining the Convention is subscribing to its rules, including as regards majority voting and budgetary

consequences of these votes. Once taken, all States Parties are bound by a decision, there are no exceptions.

Mr. Chairperson,

The 25th Conference of the States Parties suspended the voting rights and other privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic. The Decision sent a strong message against impunity for the use of chemical weapons, and in defence of international law, including international humanitarian law, as well as the integrity of the Convention. It was an appropriate response by the Conference to the documented violations by the Syrian regime of the Convention and its core principles. To restore its voting rights and privileges, the Syrian regime needs to resolve all pending issues, declare the full extent of its chemical weapons programme, and return to full compliance in accordance with its obligations under UNSC Resolution 2118 and the CWC.

The continued non-compliance of the Syrian regime causes serious damage to the object and purpose of the Convention. The Conference therefore decided at its 28th Session on additional measures related to, inter alia, transfers of scheduled chemicals, their pre-cursors and equipment to Syria and elsewhere. Full implementation of this decision is crucial to prevent any future use of chemical weapons in Syria. The decision also encourages increased cooperation to tackle the threat of chemical weapons use by non-state actors, including terrorist groups.

Mr. Chairperson,

Use of chemical weapons has been independently attributed to the Syrian regime on nine occasions by the thorough and comprehensive investigations carried out by the UN and the OPCW. The EU has imposed restrictive measures on high-level Syrian regime officials and scientists as well as entities for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons. We are ready to consider introducing further measures as appropriate.

The EU is committed to ensuring full accountability for those responsible for these heinous crimes in Syria and beyond, including through the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. We have taken note of the establishment of a cross-regional working group to advance proposals for international criminal accountability for documented chemical weapons use, and look forward to concrete proposals for addressing impunity. In this light we wish to reiterate that the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court defines employing asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and all analogous liquids, materials or devices as a war crime.

I would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document of this session and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you.

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