



OPCW

Executive Council

Fifty-Eighth Meeting

16 April 2018

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26 April 2018

ENGLISH only

JOINT STATEMENT

BY

AUSTRALIA, BULGARIA, CANADA, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, DENMARK, ESTONIA, FRANCE, GERMANY, ICELAND, ITALY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, THE NETHERLANDS, POLAND, SLOVAKIA, THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND, AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

OPCW investigators have been in the Syrian Arab Republic for two weeks now. They are conducting their work in extremely difficult circumstances. They have our full support. Instead of working with the OPCW to support its investigation, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Russian Federation have continued to create obstacles to delay its deployment to Douma and to wage a propaganda campaign against the OPCW. Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America, the signatories of this joint declaration and States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter ‘the Convention’), hereby wish to draw attention and call for an end to the unacceptable defamation of the OPCW by the Russian Federation. Today, the Russian Federation has decided to hold a so-called information meeting at OPCW Headquarters that is nothing more than a crude propaganda exercise.

Worse, by presenting the briefing on the OPCW premises, the Russian Federation is trying to create the false impression that the OPCW has convened this meeting at Russia's request. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Director-General of the OPCW has made a clear point of distancing himself from this event. He informed the Russian Federation that such a meeting, in which “witnesses” will claim that they were hired to simulate a chemical weapons attack, goes against the work currently being carried out in the Syrian Arab Republic by OPCW investigators, and that if these “witnesses” have useful information on the incident, they should first be presented to the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to be interviewed.

The authenticity of the information gathered to date on the chemical attacks that occurred in Douma on 7 April 2018, through numerous testimonies, is unassailable. Medical NGOs have found traces of chemical agents on the victims. Photographs and videos, numerous and mutually reinforcing, have been authenticated. The symptoms of more than 500 patients who presented on the same day of the attack at healthcare facilities undoubtedly corresponded to gas intoxication. The World Health Organization has expressed its concern at reports from its partners of patients exhibiting signs and symptoms consistent with exposure to toxic chemicals. We expect this information to be tested and verified by the FFM through its independent examination.



Obstruction, propaganda, and misinformation are attempts to undermine the multilateral framework. We call on the Russian Federation to cooperate fully with the OPCW, as it has repeatedly claimed it is willing to do and as required by its international commitments. We also call on the Russia Federation to exercise its responsibility to urge the Syrian Arabic to fully honour its commitments under the Convention.

We reiterate our full support for the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and express our full confidence in the work of the Organisation.

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