



OPCW

Executive Council

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ITALY

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ANDREA PERUGINI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ITALY TO THE OPCW
AT THE FIFTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General, distinguished delegates,

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by Ambassador Krassimir Kostov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria.

First of all, I would like to thank the Director-General for timely convening this meeting of the Executive Council and for his comprehensive statement delivered today on the activities that the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) is carrying out to investigate the recent reported devastating and utterly deplorable use of chemical weapons. The rapid deployment of the FFM to Douma is an element of primary importance considering the extremely justified and serious concern provoked by the new reported inhumane use of chemical weapons.

Thus, I would also like to express our appreciation and support to him for his relentless efforts in bringing forward the continuation of the work of the FFM, investigating, studying and analysing all available information and facts relating to all allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

I wish to seize this opportunity to also reiterate and emphasise the remarkable professionalism and dedication showed by the inspectors operating in very difficult circumstances and express appreciation to the FFM personnel for their dedication and the qualified manner in which they carry out their duties.

Italy reiterates, once again, its full support to the FFM and its mandate of establishing, in an independent and impartial manner, the facts related with the allegations of use of chemical weapons. These allegations must be urgently investigated, without any limitation or restriction. We are looking forward to the final report on the conclusions of the investigation carried out by the FFM team in Douma.

Italy calls upon all relevant parties to extend their full cooperation to the FFM to ensure that it completes its mission in a safe and secure manner. In particular I wish express our appreciation also for the security support from the United Nations.

We reiterate our strong conviction that we all have a common responsibility to prevent any use of chemical weapons and to ensure accountability of all perpetrators, thus avoiding further erosion of the chemical non-proliferation regime.



No effort must be spared to identify and hold accountable those involved in the use of chemical weapons to prevent further atrocities. It is essential to re-establish an international independent and effective investigation and attribution mechanism. We stress once more the need to unblock the stalemate following the expiration of the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism.

I appeal to you all to focus on what unites us and is at the core of the Chemical Weapons Convention: the use of any toxic chemicals as weapons, by anyone, be it a State or a non-State actor, anywhere, and under any circumstances is abhorrent, illegal, and must be systematically and rigorously condemned. It cannot be tolerated.

As to last Saturday morning, Italy believes that it was a motivated response to the use of chemical weapons in Douma. It is not the first time that the Syrian regime uses chemical weapons in these years of conflict. One hundred years after the end of WWI we cannot accept the idea that the use of chemical weapons be resumed in today's conflicts. We cannot do it because they are prohibited by all laws and international conventions. We cannot accept it because of their humanitarian impact on civilian victims. These atrocious weapons are unacceptable and unworthy of our civilisation.

The international community must redouble its efforts to prevent the use of chemical weapons. Saturday morning's action was limited. It should not and must not be the beginning of an escalation. Over the last seven years Italy has always argued that the Syrian crisis could not be solved by means of the use of force. It never argued that Assad's regime would have ended simply by using force, without having to sit at a negotiating table. What happened the other night must remain limited and may represent a further wake-up call, an incentive to restore centrality to the process of dialogue and negotiation. It is time to ban chemical weapons altogether and to give room to diplomacy in order to grant stability and pluralism to the Syrian Arab Republic.

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