

International Partnership against impunity for the use of chemical weapons

Statement

24th of April, 2020

Supporting the OPCW upon the delivery of the first IIT report

1. We, the participating States of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, stand together to preserve the international standards and norms against the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances.
2. We welcome the publication of the first report of the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) on 8 April, 2020, which contributes to fighting impunity by identifying the Syrian Arab Air Force as responsible for a series of chemical weapons attacks in Ltamenah, Syria on the 24th, 25th and 30th of March, 2017. We express support and appreciation for the professional, impartial, and independent work carried out by the IIT.
3. We strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force, as the IIT concluded in its report, and by anyone under any circumstances, and demand cessation of such use."
4. We regret the lack of cooperation the IIT has faced from Syria in this process, including Syria's refusal to grant access to its territory to the head of the IIT and his team, as well as access to confidential information relating to its chemical military program.
5. We express our deepest sympathy for the victims of chemical weapons use. We strongly believe that those abhorrent crimes cannot remain unpunished and that we owe it to the victims to take action.
6. We call on all parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to continue to fight impunity by sending a clear signal from the international community that such use will not be tolerated. We demand that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons be held accountable; and we, the participating States of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, commit to cooperate to the greatest extent possible in connection with criminal investigations and prosecutions, including with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI), relating to units of the Syrian Arab Air Force's use of chemical weapons in attacks at Ltamenah.
7. We are determined to continue to combat the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons, and prevent impunity for those who resort to the use of such weapons or contribute to their development. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the repeated use of these weapons.

8. We reiterate our strong support for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, an essential pillar of the international disarmament and counter proliferation architecture and the rules based international order on which we all rely. We underline the importance of the full implementation of the Convention. We call upon all States to ratify or accede to and fully implement the Convention without delay.

9. We also reiterate our full confidence in the impartiality, professionalism and capacity of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to implement the decisions taken and tasks assigned by the States Parties.

10. We strongly believe that with its expertise and its independent and impartial nature, as well as with the additional resources it has rightfully been provided, the OPCW Technical Secretariat is well-equipped to perform the technical task of identification.

11. We reaffirm the importance of full respect for the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare; the Geneva Conventions ; with UN Security Resolutions (UNSCRs) 2314 (2016), 2235 and 2209 (2015), 2118 (2013), 1540 (2004), and 2325 (2016). We also recall UNGA resolution A/73/45 (2018), A/72/43 (2017) and UNGA resolution A/RES/74/40 (2019), as well as Human Rights Council (HRC) Resolution S-17/1 (2011).

12. We recall that our Partnership was founded on 23 January 2018 to strengthen our cooperation to support the Chemical Weapons Convention, to help identify those responsible for chemical weapons use as a step towards bringing them to justice, and to support the work of dedicated OPCW and UN bodies working in this field. We made clear and unequivocal commitments to achieve this objective which can be found in a Declaration of principles. Forty States drawn from all geographical regions and the European Union have joined the partnership to date. We encourage the countries that are not yet members but that share our concerns to join us.

13. We recall the Ministerial declarations adopted by the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons on 23 January 2018 and 18 May 2018 in Paris. Experts from our respective countries have worked together along with relevant international bodies and institutions to make progress towards the goal of fighting impunity. They met most recently in Paris on the 14th and 15th of November 2019 to discuss issues and share experiences related to criminal prosecution and administrative sanctions in the context of chemical weapons use and proliferation. We will continue to join forces to enhance our shared capacity and capability to take action against impunity, including by exchanging information and experience, coordinating positions, and raising awareness on these issues within the international community as well as to jointly prepare to address the remaining challenges within the OPCW./.