

Joint Statement by UNSC Members following the UNSC meeting on Syria Chemical Weapons, 7 February 2023

Media stakeout by UN Security Council Members: Albania, Ecuador, France, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, the United States and my own country the United Kingdom

Today, the Security Council discussed the latest report from the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The IIT has concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Republic was responsible for the 2018 chemical weapon attack in Douma, which killed 43 men, women and children and affected dozens more.

We welcome this report as an important and necessary step in establishing the truth about the horrific 2018 attack on Douma. We commend the efforts of the investigation teams and acknowledge the bravery and contributions of the first responders, witnesses, and all those who participated in the international investigation.

We also express our full support for the impartial, independent and professional work of the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat, who have worked tirelessly over the years on the Syria file.

This is the ninth independent impartial expert finding on the basis of a sufficient and reliable body of information that the Syrian Arab Republic was responsible for the use of chemical weapons, and yet we are still no closer to accountability for the perpetrators or justice for the victims. This report should be a further step towards accountability and justice for the victims of these attacks.

Failure to hold those who violate the Chemical Weapons Convention to account signals to others that these attacks are acceptable. Impunity for the use of chemical weapons, by anyone, in any circumstances, cannot and will not be allowed.

As Under-Secretary-General for disarmament affairs and OPCW Director General have made clear in their many reports and briefings to the Council, including during today's meeting, Syria's initial and subsequent declarations to the OPCW cannot be considered accurate and complete.

This lack of assurance of the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles and the ongoing failure of Syria to implement its obligations under the CWC and UNSCR 2118 poses an ongoing threat to international peace and security. Syria remains in violation of its commitments under the Chemical Weapons Convention, despite its accession in 2013. Syria is still in breach of its obligations under UNSCR 2118, which was unanimously adopted by the Council in 2013.

So, today, we call on Syria, yet again, to remove any obstacles and cooperate fully with the OPCW and fulfil its international obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and UNSCR 2118.

We will not give up until we have assurance from the OPCW that Syria has taken the actions necessary to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, under any circumstances.