

International Partnership against impunity for the use of chemical weapons Statement - Supporting the OPCW upon the delivery of the second IIT report

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From: Global Affairs Canada

Statement

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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.

We welcome the publication of the second report of the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) on 12 April, 2021, which contributes to fighting impunity by identifying the Syrian Arab Air Force under the control of the Tiger Forces as responsible for a chemical weapons attack in eastern Saraqib on 4 February, 2018, with a military helicopter dropping at least one cylinder that ruptured and released a toxic gas, chlorine, which was dispersed over a large area, causing 12 identified human casualties. We express support and appreciation for the professional, impartial, and independent work carried out by the IIT.

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.

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.

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.

Supporting the OPCW in its efforts to uphold the Chemical Weapons Convention, we recall our joint statement published on the 24th of April 2020 that welcomed the publication of the first report of the OPCW's IIT on 8 April, 2020, which identified 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 recall the Executive Council's decision "Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-94/DEC.2, dated 9 July 2020). This decision was followed by

the adoption of a decision by the Conference of the States Parties at its Twenty-Fifth session entitled “Addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (C-25/DEC.9, dated 21 April 2021).

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, 2 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 the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force under the control of the Tiger Forces in an attack at Saraqib.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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/72/43 (2017), A/73/45 (2018), A/74/40 (2019) and A/75/55 (2020), as well as Human Rights Council (HRC) Resolution S-17/1 (2011).

We recall that our Partnership was founded on 23 January 2018 and that we took clear and unequivocal commitments 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.

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