Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

"We will not cease in our efforts to stop the use of chemical weapons"

2017-11-17

Thank you Mr President.

Last month I was disappointed that a simple technical rollover of the JIM mandate was blocked by Russia. Yesterday I was deeply disappointed that, even after extensive efforts to reach an agreement, a further reasonable attempt to renew the mandate was again vetoed by Russia. That veto seriously damaged my hope that those using chemical weapons in Syria would be identified and held to account.

But now I am frankly astounded that Russia has rebuffed Japan's perfectly sensible proposal to ask the Secretary General and the Director General of the OPCW to consider the structure and methodology of the JIM. This third veto in a month clearly exposes, if it wasn't already obvious, Russia's determination to protect their Syrian ally, whatever the harm that causes to the ban on the use of chemical weapons, to the wider international system of rules, to Russia's own reputation.

This council set up the JIM unanimously, as the most appropriate mechanism to investigate allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria. And since its inception it has had many successes. Its experienced and expert staff have demonstrated complete impartiality. Its investigations have been professional, thorough, rigorous. It has concluded that the Syrian regime is responsible for blatant, repeated use of chemical weapons against its own people, in an increasingly reckless and deadly manner. It has also found that Daesh is responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The failure to renew the JIM is a failure to uncover the truth behind the conduct of all actors who use chemical weapons in Syria.

As I said yesterday, those of us who are committed to upholding the international system will not cease in our efforts to stop the use of chemical weapons, and to identify and hold to account those who use these vile weapons. We will keep going. Not only to bring justice to those who have suffered from the use of these despicable weapons but also to deter those who might think of doing so in future.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-will-not-cease-in-our-efforts-to-stop-the-use-of-chemical-weapons