European External Action Service (EEAS)

# Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell on behalf of the EU on the release of the first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team

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The European Union welcomes the release of the first report of the Investigation and Identification Team to the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and to the Secretary General of the United Nations on 8 April 2020. We fully support the report's findings and note with great concern its conclusions. The European Union strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force as concluded by the report. Those identified responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable for these reprehensible acts.

Accountability is essential to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. The use of chemical weapons by anyone – be it a State or a non-State actor – anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances is a violation of international law and can amount to the most serious of international crimes - war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Impunity for these horrible acts will not be tolerated. It is now up to the International Community to duly consider the report and take appropriate action. The European Union, consistent with its own commitment to the Partnership against impunity of the use of chemical weapons, is determined to ensure that this clear violation of the core principles of the Convention receives the strongest possible response from the Chemical Weapons Convention's States Parties.

The European Union has previously imposed restrictive measures on high-level Syrian officials and scientists for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons and is ready to consider introducing further measures as appropriate.

The European Union is a steadfast supporter of the Chemical Weapons Convention, a key instrument of international arms control and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The European Union is committed, at the highest level, to supporting the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in its efforts to implement the decision of States Parties, in June 2018, to put in place arrangements to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The European Union reiterates its full support to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and underlines the complementarity of its work with the United Nations.

We have full confidence in the objectivity, impartiality and independence of the Organisation’s Technical Secretariat and its Investigation and Identification Team.

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