



INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGAINST IMPUNITY FOR THE USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS



Ministerial declaration*

We, the participating States to the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, condemn in the strongest terms the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons, the reemergence of which we deplore.

We reaffirm our condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstance, emphasizing that all uses of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances are unacceptable, and contravene international standards and norms against such use.

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 counter proliferation architecture and the rules based international order on which we all rely. We call upon all States to ratify or accede to and fully implement the Convention without delay. We pledge our unequivocal support to the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). And 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; with 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), as well as Human Rights Council (HRC) Resolution S-17/1 (2011).

We condemn the repeated use of chemical weapons in Syria by the Syrian armed forces and by Daesh as confirmed by the OPCW-UN Joint Investigation Mechanism. Use of such weapons continues to kill and wound large numbers of men, women and children, including in the currently investigated attack on 7 April 2018 in Duma. Substantive information on the latter, from a number of sources, was presented on the highly likely responsibility of the Syrian armed forces and security forces.

We condemn the use of a nerve agent on 4 March 2018 in the city of Salisbury in the United Kingdom, against a British and a Russian citizen, which put in danger a British police officer and dozens of civilians. We share and agree with the United Kingdom's analysis that it is highly likely that Russia was responsible for the attack and that there is no plausible alternative explanation.

We condemn the use of a chemical weapon - nerve agent VX - in a fatal incident on 13 February 2017 at Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

We condemn the use of propaganda, false and fabricated news stories or other such tools and campaigns designed to deliberately create misinformation about chemical weapons attacks and to avoid attribution and accountability.

We deeply regret the non-renewal of the mandate of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) last November. Russia's opposition to the renewal of this mandate in the UN Security Council deprived the international community of an essential instrument of investigation, attribution and deterrence against those responsible for the chemical attacks in Syria. We call on Russia to reconsider its position so that new attribution mechanism may be established.

We regret that no measure has so far been adopted by key international bodies to hold to account the perpetrators involved in chemical attacks.

We believe that it is the responsibility of all States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, to uphold it as a foundation of the international disarmament, non-proliferation and broader security

architecture, and to do everything possible to stop and prevent such heinous attacks that undermine human dignity. We join in the fight against the impunity currently enjoyed by those who use and develop these inhumane weapons that the international community has been working to ban since early last century, a work solidified with the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1997.

In response to the most recent use of chemical weapons, we have convened this urgent meeting of the participating States of the Partnership on 18 May 2018 following the recent cases of use of these weapons in Salisbury and Syria. We have exchanged our assessments of the situation and have worked to further strengthen our cooperation in order to support international organizations, in particular OPCW, and dedicated mechanisms in their activities to combat impunity for the use of chemical weapons.

We discussed ways to strengthen the longstanding international norm against the use of chemical weapons, in particular to make all necessary means available for the development of effective, impartial and independent attribution arrangements to identify those responsible for chemical attacks.

We have also explored possibilities of reinforcing the OPCW's capacity and tools to strengthen its verification regime, and call on States Parties to the Convention to work to that end at the fourth Review conference.

We believe that capacity building efforts are essential to assist States Parties in implementing their obligation under the Convention as mentioned in the Declaration of principles. To that end, we commit to engage and identify synergies with related initiatives, including the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.

National sanctions have been adopted by some participating States and additional sanctions were announced at the meeting for publication on the partnership website, as appropriate.

We commend the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, including its Declaration Assessment Team and Fact Finding Mission.

We also welcome the International Impartial and Independent mechanism (IIIM) to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, which continue to contribute substantively to work investigating the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Given the gravity of the situation, we support the call for a special session of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in The Hague next month to work on supporting the Convention and its implementing body, the OPCW. We call on all States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to support the holding of this meeting and to work together to strengthen the ability of the OPCW to promote the implementation of the Convention, including exploring options for attributing responsibility for chemical weapons attacks.

We founded this Partnership on 23 January 2018 to strengthen our cooperation to protect 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.

More than thirty states drawn from all geographical regions have joined the partnership to date. We welcome the growing membership of the Partnership, and the many countries not yet members that share our concerns. We solemnly call upon those who have yet to do so to join our International Partnership against impunity for the use of chemical weapons to send a clear message that they join our common refusal to accept impunity for anyone, anywhere responsible for the use of chemical weapons and are committed to putting an end to their use.

*** The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and the Republic of Peru did not participate to the discussions that led to the adoption of this declaration.**