

Declaration by the High Representative Federica Mogherini on behalf of the EU on strikes in Syria

The European Union reiterates its strongest condemnation of the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime, as confirmed by the OPCW/UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and as reported continuously in recent months in Eastern Ghouta and other areas in Syria, including the most recent reports of a devastating chemical attack on Douma.

In this context, the EU was informed about targeted US, French and UK airstrikes on chemical weapons facilities in Syria, these specific measures having been taken with the sole objective to prevent further use of chemical weapons and chemical substances as weapons by the Syrian regime to kill its own people.

The EU is supportive of all efforts aimed at the prevention of the use of chemical weapons. It finds it deeply shocking that the international community is still confronted with the use of chemical weapons, as confirmed by the OPCW Fact Finding Mission. The reports of the Declaration Assessment Team show that the Syrian declaration cannot be fully verified as accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Accountability is a must. The use of chemical weapons or chemical substances as weapons is a war crime and a crime against humanity. Perpetrators will be held accountable for this violation of international law. Therefore, the EU deeply regrets that the mandate of the JIM, established by UNSC Resolution 2235 (2015) to identify perpetrators of chemical attacks, has not been renewed in November 2017. In this respect, it is highly regrettable that the UN Security Council has so far failed to adopt a strong resolution re-establishing an independent attribution mechanism to ensure accountability for perpetrators of chemical weapons' attacks in Syria.

In July 2017 and in March 2018, the EU imposed additional restrictive measures on Syrian high-level officials and scientists for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons and is always ready to consider imposing further measures as appropriate.

The EU calls upon all countries, notably Russia and Iran, to use their influence to prevent any further use of chemical weapons, notably by the Syrian regime, and supports the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

The EU reiterates that there can be no other solution to the Syrian conflict than political. We have a common goal in preventing any escalation of violence that could transform the Syrian crisis into a wider regional confrontation, with incalculable consequences for the Middle East and indeed the whole world. The EU calls upon all parties to the conflict, especially the regime and its allies, to implement immediately the ceasefire, and to ensure humanitarian access and medical evacuations as unanimously agreed in UNSC Resolution 2401. The EU repeats that any sustainable solution to the conflict requires a genuine political transition in line with UNSCR 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communique negotiated by the Syrian parties within the UN-led Geneva process.

The Second Brussels Conference on Syria which will be held on 24-25 April 2018, co-chaired by the EU and the UN, will be the opportunity for the entire international community to relaunch its consistent support for the political process and commit new pledges to help the main victims of this ongoing conflict, namely the Syrian people inside and outside Syria.