



FACT SHEET

OPCW – UN JOINT INVESTIGATIVE MECHANISM

Security Council Resolution 2235 (2015)

The Security Council adopted resolution 2235 (2015) on 7 August 2015, condemning any use of any toxic chemical, such as chlorine, as a weapon in the Syrian Arab Republic (SAR). It expressed its determination to identify those responsible for such acts, and reiterated that they must be held accountable.

Mandate

The resolution established the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) – United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (Mechanism) with the mandate “to identify to the greatest extent feasible individuals, entities, groups, or governments who were perpetrators, organisers, sponsors or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons, including chlorine or any other toxic chemical, in the Syrian Arab Republic where the OPCW Fact Finding Mission (FFM) determines or has determined that a specific incident in the SAR involved or likely involved the use of chemicals as weapons.”

The Mechanism functions as a non-judicial investigative mechanism. Its work is bound by the principles of impartiality, objectivity and independence, and is undertaken in a professional and confidential manner.

Composition

The Mechanism is led by the Leadership Panel, headed by Virginia Gamba (Argentina) and two deputies, Adrian Neritani (Albania) and Eberhard Schanze (Germany), who are responsible for the political and investigation components, respectively. The Leadership Panel is supported by a core staff of professionals grouped into three components, a political and a support and planning office in New York, and an investigative office in The Hague. A small liaison office is based in Damascus.

Reporting

Pursuant to resolution 2235 (2015), the Mechanism submitted its first report ([S/2016/142](#)) to the Security Council in February 2016, covering the Mechanism’s activities since its establishment on 24 September 2015. The report provided an overview of the work of the Mechanism to date, the sources of information available to it and the methodology behind the investigation. During the reporting period, the Mechanism reviewed FFM information and evidence, as well as information received from Member States, non-governmental organizations, individual groups or entities, and open sources.

The Mechanism identified the following cases for further investigation (with dates of related incidents):

Kafr Zita (10-11 and 18 April 2014) in Hama Governorate; Talmenes (21 April 2014), Qmenas, (16 March 2015), Sarmin (16 March 2015), Binnish (23-24 March 2015), and Al Tamanah (29-30 April 2014 and 25-26 May 2014), all in Idlib Governorate; and Marea (21 August 2015) in Aleppo Governorate.

In June 2016, the Security Council considered the Mechanism's progress report ([S/2016/530](#)) on its in-depth investigation into the nine selected cases related to incidents involving the use of chemicals as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic between April 2014 and August 2015. In the reporting period, the investigation had moved on to analysing, assessing and corroborating the information, while still receiving new data. In support of the investigation, the Mechanism continues to engage with Member States and other stakeholders, as well as forensic institutes and specialized laboratories.



“Toxic substances should not be used as weapons by anyone, anywhere, ever. This is a conviction we all share. I believe that the Joint Investigative Mechanism was established to turn this conviction into effective action,”

Virginia Gamba, Head of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, during the briefing to the Security Council, New York, 16 June 2016

Witness interviews are ongoing, as are visits to capitals, the Syrian Arab Republic and other countries the region, both by the Leadership Panel and the investigators. This work will continue and will be reported to the Security Council in another written report in August 2016.

In the absence of a framework to guide the Mechanism's efforts in fulfilling its unprecedented mandate, the Leadership Panel developed operational guidelines and procedures. The Leadership Panel will submit them to the Security Council before the conclusion of the Mechanism's mandate.

Funding

For the period from 24 September to 31 December 2015, initial funding for the Mechanism was provided by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General under the commitment authority of the Secretary-General, pursuant to the provisions set out in General Assembly resolution 68/249 on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for the biennium 2014-2015. For the period from January to September 2016, the Mechanism is recognized as a special political mission and is funded as such, covering only staff salaries. The Mechanism's Voluntary Trust Fund was established in September 2015 to cover material and technical needs. By the end of June 2016, contributions from 12 countries had been received.