

# SWEDEN



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

by

Magnus Hellgren  
Deputy Director General, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs

at the

First Committee, Thematic Debate on Other Weapons of Mass Destruction

United Nations  
New York

17 October 2016

Chairperson,

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the Nordic countries Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and my own country, Sweden.

Lamentably, the past year has seen continued cases of alleged use of chemical weapons in both Iraq and Syria. The UN/OPCW Joint Investigatory Mechanism established under UN Security Council Resolution 2235 has confirmed what many believed to be true, namely that the Syrian regime bears the responsibility for several attacks involving chlorine gas, and that the terrorist group Daesh has used mustard gas in the Syrian conflict. The perpetrators of these inhumane and barbaric attacks must be brought to justice. As stated by the Secretary-General, there must be no impunity for those who commit war crimes and other international crimes.

The Nordic countries are deeply concerned with the continued gaps, inconsistencies and ambiguities in the chemical weapons declarations that the Syrian regime submitted in 2013, as reported by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team. The Syrian regime must cooperate fully and pro-actively with the OPCW in addressing comprehensively all outstanding questions, so that the international community can gain confidence that the reports are accurate and complete. The Nordic countries welcome the work conducted over the past year by the JIM, the OPCW Fact-Finding Missions and the Declarations Assessment Team – oftentimes in difficult and dangerous circumstances. The Nordic countries have supported JIM and the OPCW teams financially, but also in the form of analytical services.

Following the contribution of Danish and Norwegian vessels in the removal of chemical weapons from the Syrian Arab Republic, and the destruction of some of those chemicals in Finland, Denmark assumed the leading role in the safe and secure removal of Libya's remaining chemical weapons. In response to a request by the Libyan Government of National Accord, and in a mission coordinated by the OPCW – following the endorsement by UN Security Council Resolution 2298 – the chemicals were successfully shipped on board a Danish

container ship last August from Libya to Germany for destruction. Finland provided funding to the OPCW, as well as a chemical weapons protection team on board the Danish vessel.

Chairperson,

Biological weapons continue to pose a significant threat to international peace and security. These risks are exacerbated by the dual-use character of some of the most beneficial scientific advances in recent years. Next month will see the eighth review conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. The Nordic countries share the objective of the European Union and most other States Parties to achieve a result that will strengthen the treaty, through an enhanced inter-sessional process. Finland, Norway and Sweden have submitted a working paper on science and technology. We hope that this and similar contributions will help facilitate a substantive outcome, which will enable States Parties to engage in a more focused review of relevant scientific advances. We look forward to engaging with other States Parties to reach a successful consensus outcome.

In the view of the Nordic countries, the review conference should encourage international cooperation in life sciences, supporting national health systems and addressing global health threats. The Ebola crisis in West Africa demonstrated the significant global security risks associated with the outbreak of contagious disease. The Nordic countries contributed significantly to the international support to the fight against Ebola. Recently, the Nordic Prime Ministers and US President Obama made a joint pledge to help strengthen worldwide capacities to implement the International Health Regulations of the World Health Organisation, in order to strengthen global health security. Norway is implementing a specific project on IHR capacity-building, and assistance projects by other Nordic countries support the same end, thereby combining global security priorities with the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal three on healthy lives and well-being. The Nordic Countries continue to engage in the Global Health Security Agenda and its different action packages, and Finland, Norway and Sweden participated actively in last week's High-Level Meeting in Rotterdam. Finland, in coordination with the WHO, has spearheaded the development of a mechanism for external evaluations of health security capacities and an Alliance in support of such evaluations. The Nordic countries

are also members of the biological security working group of the Global Partnership.

Chairperson,

The Secretary General's Mechanism is indispensable for the international community's ability to deal with allegations of use of biological and chemical weapons – including in countries not party to the OPCW or territories outside of state control. The Nordic countries are strong supporters of the mechanism. Earlier this month, Sweden hosted its third United Nations training course for biological weapons experts on the UN roster and second international workshop on laboratory cooperation related to biological weapons. We welcome all international efforts in order to ensure the continued operational readiness of the Secretary General's mechanism.

In conclusion, we would like to express the serious concern of the Nordic Countries with the continued risk of biological and chemical weapons in the hands of non-state actors. We welcome the on-going comprehensive review of UN Security Council Resolution 1540. We have taken note of the Russian proposal for a new convention on biological and chemical terrorism, and are reviewing its added value, and most effective venue for possible further discussion. It is important, however, first and foremost to realize the full potential of existing international instruments such as the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions, UN Security Council resolution 1540 and the international convention on terrorist bombings, in order to minimize the risks associated with non-state actors. The Nordic countries therefore call for the universalization and full national implementation of all legal instruments relevant to combatting the proliferation of biological and chemical weapons.

Last but not least, we urgently call for the immediate halt to all attacks involving chemical weapons in Iraq and Syria.

Thank you Chairperson