

Statement by President Juncker on the Situation in Syria

A horrific chemical weapons attack on civilians struck Khan Shaykhun on 4 April. Last night, in response, the US launched air strikes on Shayrat Airfield. The US has informed the EU that these strikes were limited and seek to deter further chemical weapons atrocities.

President **Juncker** has been unequivocal in his condemnation of the use of chemical weapons. The repeated use of such weapons must be answered. He understands efforts to deter further attacks. There is a clear distinction between air strikes on military targets and the use of chemical weapons against civilians.

Efforts to stem the spiral of violence in Syria and work towards a lasting peace should be redoubled. Only a political transition can lead to such an outcome. President Juncker and the European Commission as a whole stand ready to play their part in full.

Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alleged chemical attack in Idlib, Syria

The EU condemns in the strongest terms the air strike that hit the town of Khan Sheikoun in Idlib province on 4 April 2017, which has had horrific consequences, causing the deaths and injuries of scores of civilians including children and relief workers, with many victims displaying symptoms of gas poisoning.

The EU urges the United Nations Security Council to come together, strongly condemn the attack on Khan Sheikoun and ensure a swift, independent and impartial investigation of the attack.

The OPCW's Fact Finding Mission (FFM) is in the process of gathering and analysing information from all available sources. While the investigation into this attack is ongoing, the EU is deeply worried to note that the Syrian regime has previously used chemical weapons in 2015, as identified in the August and October reports of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism, and which the EU strongly condemned at the time. In this context, the EU reiterates that as a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Syrian regime has explicitly obligated itself to refrain from the use of chemical weapons and that the Syrian regime has the primary responsibility for the

protection of the Syrian population. The EU therefore calls on the regime's allies, notably Russia, to exercise appropriate pressure on the Syrian regime to this end.

The use of chemical weapons or chemical substances as weapons amounts to a war crime. Their use in Syria, including by the regime and Da'esh, must stop and identified perpetrators must be held accountable for this violation of international law.

Those guilty of violations of international law and the use of chemical weapons have to be sanctioned accordingly. In March, the EU added 4 high-ranking Syrian military officials to the sanctions list for their role in the use of chemical weapons against the civilian population, in line with the EU's policy to fight the proliferation and use of chemical weapons.

The EU will continue to support the efforts of the OPCW in Syria with regard to the investigation of the use of chemical weapons and considers that such efforts have to be continued in the future by the international community.

This attack constitutes a flagrant violation of the ceasefire. It underlines the urgent need for a real and verified ceasefire. The EU calls on Russia, Turkey and Iran to live up to their commitments as guarantors in this regard.

Attacks of this kind only reinforce the urgent need for a genuine political transition in Syria and the EU's will to support UN efforts to broker a political solution to the Syrian conflict through the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva, as reaffirmed at the International Conference "Supporting the future of Syria and the region" that the EU hosted in Brussels on 5 April 2017.

Mogherini rencontre Mankeur Ndiaye, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères de la République du Sénégal

La Haute Représentante/Vice-Présidente Federica Mogherini, a rencontré aujourd'hui à Bruxelles Mankeur Ndiaye, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères et des Sénégalais de l'Extérieur de la République du Sénégal.

La Haute Représentante s'est félicité de l'excellente qualité des relations entre l'Union Européenne et le Sénégal. La rencontre aujourd'hui s'inscrit dans le cadre du dialogue permanent entre ces deux partenaires de longue date dans de multiples dossiers régionaux et internationaux.

Mogherini a salué le Sénégal pour son engagement à promouvoir la paix et la stabilité en Afrique et sa participation significative aux opérations de maintien de la paix. Elle a souligné le fait que le Forum International sur

la Paix et la Sécurité en Afrique, dont la quatrième édition se déroulera au mois de novembre à Dakar, sera l'occasion de poursuivre le dialogue stratégique sur les menaces communes telles que la radicalisation et l'extrémisme violent.

Les deux parties ont aussi évoqué le prochain sommet Afrique-UE, qui offrira une opportunité unique de renforcer la relation entre les deux continents et de se concentrer sur les opportunités qu'offre la jeune population d'Afrique.

Ils ont passé en revue leur coopération dans le domaine de la migration et ils ont accueilli positivement les progrès accomplis. Mogherini et le Ministre Ndiaye ont aussi réitéré leur préoccupation commune quant au nombre de migrants mettant leur vies en péril en mer et dans le désert, ou restant bloqués sur la route vers la Méditerranée, qui sont souvent les victimes de passeurs et traquants sans scrupules. Mogherini a souligné l'importance du travail de l'OIM au Niger, et en Libye, et l'appui donné par l'Union européenne, pour fournir un soutien aux ressortissants des pays tiers.

Les deux parties ont salué les efforts du nouveau gouvernement en Gambie pour relancer le pays sur la voie de la démocratie, des droits humains et de l'Etat de droit. Mogherini a confirmé le soutien de l'Union européenne à la Gambie et a souligné le rôle essentiel du Sénégal dans l'évolution positive des derniers mois.

High Representation/Vice-President Federica Mogherini meets with the Syrian opposition representatives to discuss the political

As a first follow up of the Brussels conference on the future of Syria and the region, the HRVP Federica Mogherini met today with the President of the Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC) Mr Anas al-Abdah, the Prime Minister of the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) Mr Jawad About Hatab and the Head of the Assistance Coordination Unit Mr Mouhammad Hassno, and their delegation.

While the conflict has entered its seventh year and the military confrontation continues to create inhumane suffering to the population, as the horrific attack in Idlib has reminded the whole world, the European Union remains actively engaged in supporting Syrians inside and outside Syria, through the humanitarian and the political work. The Syria strategy endorsed by the Foreign Affairs Council on the 3 April and the outcome of the Brussels conference will be the framework for the further initiatives the European Union will take.

The European Union will continue to provide support to education and job creation, support for local civilian governance structures in opposition held areas, including by working with the Syrian Interim Government. Avoiding the collapse of local and state administrations is also indispensable to guarantee a future to a sovereign, independent, united and democratic Syria.

To this aim, Federica Mogherini and her interlocutors discussed the practical support the European Union can continue to give to the Syrian opposition to accelerate the UN mediated talks in Geneva for a political settlement that can bring about a genuine political transition, based on relevant UNSC Resolutions. While stepping up its engagement on the political track, the European Union will continue to improve the daily lives of all Syrians, and stands ready to contribute to the reconciliation and the reconstruction of the country once a political transition will be firmly underway.

Statement by the Spokesperson on the human rights abuses of gay men in Chechnya

According to reports by international human rights organisations and by the media, over a hundred gay men in the Russian Republic of Chechnya have been abducted in recent days, as part of a coordinated campaign. The abducted men have reportedly been tortured and otherwise ill-treated, and forced to disclose other LGBTI individuals they know. Reports also indicate that at least three men have been killed by their captors.

If confirmed, these serious human rights violations would add to the long list of human rights abuses in Chechnya. Instead of supporting the rights of the victims, some officials of the Chechen Republic have even attempted to justify the violence against them. The Russian authorities have taken international human rights commitments that bind them at all levels to ensure the safety of all persons who may be at risk in Chechnya due to their sexual orientation.

Prompt, effective and thorough investigations into the reports of abductions and killings of gay men in Chechnya are indispensable so that anyone found guilty of or complicit in such crimes is brought to justice.