

Statement by the North Atlantic Council on Actions Taken Against the Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria

In the North Atlantic Council today the United States, France and United Kingdom briefed Allies on their joint military action on 14 April. They briefed that a significant body of information indicated that the Syrian regime was responsible for the attack against civilians in Douma on 7 April, and that their military action was limited to the Syrian regime's facilities enabling the production and employment of chemical weapons. The three Allies emphasized that there was no practicable alternative to the use of force.

Allies expressed their full support for this action intended to degrade the Syrian regime's chemical weapons capability and deter further chemical weapon attacks against the people of Syria. Chemical weapons cannot be used with impunity or become normalized. They are an immediate danger to the Syrian people and to our collective security. Allies regret that the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, established by UNSC Resolution 2235 (2015), to identify perpetrators of chemical attacks, was not renewed in November 2017. Allies support international mechanisms to establish responsibility and prevent impunity for the use of chemical weapons.

Allies strongly condemned the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime, and called for those responsible to be held to account. Allies also called on the Syrian regime and its backers to allow rapid, sustained and unhindered humanitarian access.

Despite sustained diplomatic efforts, the Syrian regime's repeated use of chemical weapons against civilians has contributed to appalling human suffering since the start of the conflict in 2011. The use of such weapons is in flagrant violation of international standards and non-proliferation norms, multiple UN Security Council Resolutions, and the Chemical Weapons Convention, which Syria ratified in 2013. NATO considers any use of chemical weapons by State or non-State actors to be a threat to international peace and security.

Allies reiterate their support for UN-led efforts to achieve a lasting political resolution to the conflict that is consistent with UNSCR 2254 (2015) and the Geneva Communiqué (2012) and call on all members of the UN Security Council to uphold their responsibilities. In this regard, the Allies call on all supporters of the Syrian regime, notably Russia, to exercise responsibility to ensure that the Syrian regime participates constructively in the UN-led Geneva process.

Allies took this opportunity to restate our commitment to the Coalition to Defeat ISIS/Da'esh, as defeating terrorism in all its forms remains a key objective for our countries and a key challenge for the stability of the region.