



**Conference on Disarmament  
2018 Session**

**Statement in plenary session by  
Mr. Louis Riquet**

Deputy Permanent Representative of France  
to the Conference on Disarmament

*Geneva, 15 May 2018*

Thank you, Madam President,

I wish to take the floor to address the actions my country took during the night of the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> April, 2018, along the United States and the United Kingdom, following the criminal use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime in Douma, on 7 April 2018.

Dozens of men, women and children were massacred in Douma on Saturday, 7 April using chemical weapons, in total violation of international law and United Nations Security Council resolutions.

France published on 14 April a national assessment, available online, based on technical analysis of open source information and declassified intelligence obtained by French services. There is no doubt as to the facts and to the responsibility of the Syrian regime.

The red line declared by France in May 2017 has been crossed. We said that such a transgression would not go unanswered. We have noted the systematic deadlock at the Security Council. We have therefore acted in accordance with our word and our responsibility, in coordination with our allies.

Assad's regime has deliberately broken the taboo there has been on the use of chemical weapons since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For the last seven years, it has constantly breached international standards with the greatest disrespect for the law of war and basic humanity.

The chemical escalade in Syria is not acceptable.

It is not acceptable, because the use of chemical weapons is a violation of a fundamental standard of international law and humanitarian law.

The employment of these arms of terror is a transgression of some of the longest-standing conventions, including the 1925 Protocol prohibiting the use of chemical weapons in warfare. It violates the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which was signed in Paris in 1993 and which Syria signed up to in 2013. The manufacture and use of such weapons is a threat to international peace and security. Those who contravene these laws choose to exclude themselves from the community of nations.

The chemical escalation is not acceptable, because the Syrian regime had committed to fully decommissioning its arsenal.

In September 2013, the Security Council took note of that commitment and decided in Resolution 2118 that Syria must keep to it, or else be subject to measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. Chapter VII has a clear meaning: the use of military measures to compel those who threaten international peace and security.

The President of the French Republic has therefore ordered the French armed forces to intervene, as part of an international operation conducted in coalition with the United States of America and the United Kingdom against the clandestine chemical weapons arsenal of the Syrian regime.

Our response has been limited to the Syrian regime's facilities enabling the production and employment of chemical weapons.

In accordance with Article 35, paragraph 2 of the French Constitution, Parliament has been informed and a parliamentary debate has been organized on 16 April, following this decision to order the intervention of our armed forces abroad.

We cannot tolerate the normalization of the employment of chemical weapons, which is an immediate danger to the Syrian people and to our collective security. That is the meaning of the initiatives constantly promoted by France and its partners at the United Nations Security Council. They aim at enabling the creation of an international mechanism to establish responsibility, prevent impunity and obstruct any temptation on the part of the Syrian regime to repeat these acts.

Since May 2017, France's priorities in Syria have been constant: finishing the fight against Daesh, enabling humanitarian assistance to civilian populations, and triggering collective momentum to bring about a peaceful settlement of the conflict so that peace can return to Syria and to ensure the region's stability.

That is why France wishes to highlight certain political initiatives. We have three imperatives:

- 1 – the verifiable and irreversible decommissioning of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

- 2 – a ceasefire across the whole Syrian territory, and humanitarian access to civilian populations as required by UN Security Council resolutions. These resolutions have the value of international law and must apply to all. They have so far been ignored. We need to ensure they become effective.
- 3 – a crisis exit plan, which needs to be reached with a political solution. We are prepared to work on that immediately, with all countries that can contribute.

Thank you./.