

Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the US strike in Syria

In response to the air strike that hit the town of Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib province on 4 April 2017, with many victims displaying symptoms of gas poisoning, the EU (in its Declaration 193/17 of 6 April 2017) has been unequivocal in its condemnation of the use of chemical weapon: the use of chemical weapons or chemical substances as weapons amounts to a war crime and identified perpetrators must be held accountable for this violation of international law.

The US has informed the European Union that, based on their assessment that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons, they launched a strike on Shayrat Airfield in Syria with the understandable intention to prevent and deter the spread and use of deadly chemical weapons. The US also informed us that these strikes are limited and focused on preventing and deterring further use of chemical weapons atrocities. The EU will continue to support the efforts and work of the OPCW, in particular in Syria, including the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism, with regard to the investigation of the use of chemical weapons. Those found responsible should be sanctioned within the framework of the United Nations.

The EU firmly believes that there can be no military solution to the conflict and is committed to the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the Syrian State. Only a credible political solution, as defined in UNSCR 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué will ensure peace and stability in Syria and enable a decisive defeat of Da'esh and other UN-designated terrorist groups in Syria.

The EU reiterates its support to the UN-mediated intra-Syrian talks in Geneva to reach a political solution to the Syrian conflict. This is even more urgent now, as reaffirmed by the International Conference "Supporting the future of Syria and the region" that the European Union hosted in Brussels on 4-5 April 2017.