

Russia, China block Security Council action on use of chemical weapons in Syria

28 February 2017 – With ‘no’ votes from permanent members Russia and China, the United Nations Security Council today failed to adopt a resolution that would, according to press reports, have imposed sanctions against parties using chemical weapons in war-torn Syria.

While nine of the Council’s members voting in favour, Bolivia joined Russia and China in rejecting the text, as Egypt, Ethiopia and Kazakhstan abstained. A negative vote – or veto – from one of the Council’s five permanent members means a resolution cannot be adopted.

Media reports suggest that the draft resolution would have established a sanctions regime, a committee and an expert panel to hold accountable those using and producing chemical weapons in Syria. The text would also have imposed sanctions on a number of individuals and entities linked to the use of chemical weapons in cases where responsibility was established by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

The Council came together on 19 December to unanimously adopt a resolution demanding that all parties to the Syrian conflict ensure immediate and unhindered access for the monitoring of evacuations from eastern Aleppo.

But today’s decision comes after the Council’s two most recent failed attempts to take action on Syria: on 8 October, Russia vetoed a resolution that would have called for an end to military flights over Aleppo; and on 5 December, a measure calling for a seven-day ceasefire in the beleaguered city failed to pass after negative votes by both China and Russia. In the past five years, Russia has vetoed seven Council texts on the Syrian conflict, while China has vetoed six of those seven.