



OPCW

Executive Council

Fifty-Ninth Meeting
18 April 2018

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**UPDATE BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE
OPCW FACT-FINDING MISSION TO DOUMA, SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC,
TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AT ITS FIFTY-NINTH MEETING**

Mr Chairperson,

On Monday, I advised the Council on the work being undertaken by the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) team that has been deployed to Damascus to establish the facts on the allegations of chemical weapons use in Douma on 7 April. I should like to take this opportunity to update the Council on this mission.

On 16 April, we received confirmation from the National Authority of the Syrian Arab Republic that, under agreements reached to allow the evacuation of the population in Ghouta, the Syrian military were unable to enter Douma. The security for the sites where the FFM plans to deploy was under the control of the Russian Military Police. The United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) has made the necessary arrangements with the Syrian authorities to escort the team to a certain point and then for the escort to be taken over by the Russian Military Police. However, the UNDSS preferred to first conduct a reconnaissance visit to the sites, which took place yesterday. FFM team members did not participate in this visit.

On arrival at Site 1, a large crowd gathered and the advice provided by the UNDSS was that the reconnaissance team should withdraw. At Site 2, the team came under small arms fire and an explosive was detonated. The reconnaissance team returned to Damascus.

The UNDSS will continue to work with the Syrian National Authority, the local Councils in Douma, and the Russian Military Police to review the security situation. At present, we do not know when the FFM team can be deployed to Douma. Of course, I shall only consider such deployment following approval by the UNDSS, and provided that our team can have unhindered access to the sites.

This incident again highlights the highly volatile environment in which the FFM is having to work and the security risks our staff are facing. I should like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to States Parties for their continued support for the FFM, as they reiterated during the Council meeting on Monday. This is particularly important for our staff taking part in such challenging missions.

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