

To: His Excellency Secretary General of OPCW
Mr Ahmet Üzümcü

Monday 17 February 2014

Your Excellency,

We support the important work OPCW does to eliminate chemical weapons but are writing to you today driven by the urgent need for greater transparency and frequency of communication around plans to remove and dispose of Syria's chemical weapons. We fear that unless your agency's public provision of information improves significantly, the integrity of the operation is at risk, as public support is eroding.

We are following with great concern the brutal use of force and human tragedy unfolding in Syria. We are also following the efforts to remove and destroy chemical weapons currently held in Syria, and share the belief that they pose an unacceptable threat for the people living in the area but also for the rest of humanity and the environment. We agree that the removal and destruction of the chemical weapons in Syria is of outmost urgency.

As part of the environmental community, we had the opportunity to be informed by you (on 16 January 2014) about the environmental precautions and protective measures in place in the operation and to share our concerns. It is clear that the whole operation raises legitimate questions. It is equally clear that there is no perfect solution but only one of minimum risk.

Greenpeace accepts that the current approach of using hydrolysis at sea is a viable solution. It is not in contradiction with the London Convention, which exists in order to prevent damage to the marine environment. We understand that hydrolysis is not without risk, but the balance of threats and safety issues means these chemical

weapons need to be taken out of the extremely volatile situation in Syria, so destruction on land, where they are currently held, is not viable.

The circumstances are exceptional and complex, and should **not** be allowed to set a precedent. Greenpeace believes that the urgent task of destroying the world's Chemical Weapons stockpiles should take place on land, with full transparency, public participation and environmental impact assessments.

When it comes to the transshipment and transfer of these materials onto a US ship for hydrolysis, any port community must be fully informed of and be willing to take any associated risk, however small. Greenpeace believes that despite the nature of the weapons and the military's secretive nature, full transparency must be guaranteed and environmental impact assessments made public.

We fear this mission is being compromised by a lack of transparency and proactive communication, as we are witnessing increasing levels of concern among local populations, authorities and civil society. It is clear to us, as already raised several times directly with OPCW, that you need to guarantee a constant flow of information and maximum transparency on the whole process as this is the only way to counter the increasing insecurity and public frustration.

With this letter we wish to flag the need for immediate advanced, regular and accurate flow of information on your behalf.

More specifically, we strongly suggest that this regular dissemination of information to relevant governments should contain, among others:

- Details, timelines and updates on the plans.
- Details on all precautions taken to avoid possible accidents (at land and, especially, at sea) as well as relevant liabilities.
- Details and guarantees on how you will meet your obligations and commitments to safeguard the marine environment.

- Details of plans in case of an accident, including ways to immediately inform governments, local authorities and all the affected population.
- Details on both destination and quantities to be taken for incineration with consent of local communities.
- Details and timelines on the quantities of byproducts of hydrolysis and their ultimate fate.

We can only stand by you in this important mission if you act with full transparency. Together with other parts of civil society movements, we will put pressure on our governments to take their own responsibility and inform their citizens on the issue. But we urgently need you to be clear, precise and open if this mission is not to be endangered by a lack of public trust.

Yours faithfully and united in the call for a world without chemical weapons,

Alexander Egit

Executive Director, Greenpeace Central and Eastern Europe



Jean-Francois Julliard

Executive Director, Greenpeace France



Nikos Charalambides

Executive Director, Greenpeace Greece




Giuseppe Onufrio

Executive Director, Greenpeace Italy



Dr. Laetitia Liebert

Executive Director, Greenpeace Mediterranean



Mario Rodríguez Vargas

Executive Director, Greenpeace Spain

