

# SA welcomes decision on chemical weapons in Syria

The Department of International Relations says South Africa has welcomed the decision paving the way for the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria.

"South Africa welcomes the decision of the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague providing for the destruction of the chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and its subsequent endorsement by the United Nations Security Council," said the department in a statement on Saturday.

It said South Africa played a central role in facilitating negotiations on the decision.

"Throughout the negotiations, South Africa sought to ensure that the decision complies with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and upholds the principles of multilateralism.

"South Africa maintains that the OPCW has the mandated responsibility to supervise the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria."

The department said South Africa was further pleased by Syria's accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention and its compliance with the first step of its obligations under the convention.

South Africa urged Syria to fully cooperate with the OPCW and to speedily and fully implement its obligations under the convention. The OPCW decision is part of diplomatic efforts to find a durable solution to the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

"South Africa deplores and condemns the use of chemical weapons in Syria in the strongest possible terms. There is no cause that could justify the use of weapons of mass destruction, by anyone or anybody under any circumstances.

"The South African government encourages all parties involved in the current conflict in Syria to, without delay, engage in a process of all-inclusive national dialogue, free of any form of violence, intimidation or outside interference aimed at regime change, in order to satisfy the legitimate democratic aspirations of the Syrian people," said the department.