UN Security Council fails to adopt Russian resolution on Syria

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The UN Security Council on Saturday failed to adopt a draft resolution tabled by Russia to condemn the air strikes against Syria by US, Britain and France.  
Russia, China and Bolivia voted for the draft. Eight members voted against it, including US, Britain and France which have veto power, while four abstained.  
US，UK and France launched military strikes against Syria Friday night, targeting sites related to its chemical weapons capabilities. US President Donald Trump announced the airstrikes in a televised address on Friday in response to the suspected chemical attack in the Syrian city of Douma on April 7.  
The US State Department said the strikes had been limited to three military locations:  a research centre at the airport in Damascus, an alleged chemical weapons facility near Homs, and an equipment storage site, also near Homs.  Both US and Russia sources had indicated that there had been no civilian casualties. But the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the UN could not independently verify the details of those reports.  
China opposed the use of force in international relations and called for respect for other countries’ sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, said Ma Zhaoxu, China’s permanent representative to the UN, after the vote at the council emergency meeting on Syria.  
“Any unilateral military action bypassing the Security Council runs contrary to the purpose and principles of the UN Charter and violates the principles of international law and the basic norms governing international relations, and will further complicate the Syrian issue,” Ma said, explaining why China voted in favor of Russia’s draft.  
China urged relevant parties refrain from actions that would further escalate tensions in Syria and settle the Syrian issue through dialogue.  
The UN chief warned against the situation in Syria from “spiraling out of control” and called on the council member states to unite and exercise their collective role in maintaining international peace and security.  
“I urge all member states to show restraint in these dangerous circumstances and to avoid any acts that could escalate matters and worsen the suffering of the Syrian people,” Guterres said.  
He reiterated in his briefing at the meeting that there is no military solution to the crisis, only a political one.  
Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia condemned in the strongest possible terms the attack on Syria and urged the US, Britain and France to immediately end “aggressive” actions.    
The United States had only worsened a catastrophic humanitarian situation, pandering to terrorists who had tormented Syrians for seven years and creating waves of refugees, Nebenzia said. “Escalating the situation was destructive for the entire international relations system,” he said.  
Experts had found no trace of activity that would have contravened the Chemical Weapons Convention, said Nebenzia, noting that scientific facilities in Syria were used for peaceful activities, notably to enhance economic performance.  
US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley said the time for talk had ended the previous night when the UK and France acted to deter the future use of chemical weapons by holding Syria accountable.  
Haley said US President Donald Trump told her this morning that if Syria uses poison gas again, the US is “locked and loaded”. “We are prepared to sustain this pressure if the Syrian regime is foolish enough to test our will,” she said.  
He said the OPCW group of experts had arrived at midday and would hold a meeting with the authorities at 7 pm local time and Syrian government would provide every support to that team.  
China also urges relevant parties to return to the framework of international law and resolve the issue through dialogue and negotiation，Ma emphasized, adding that political settlement is the only way out.  
Relevant parties of the international community should continue to support UN's role as the main channel for mediation and make relentless efforts to facilitate the final settlement of the Syrian issue.  
About the suspected use of chemical weapons in Syria, Ma said a comprehensive, impartial and objective investigation is necessary to reach a reliable conclusion that could stand the test of time. “Before that, a prejudgement should not be made,” he said.  
China stands ready to continue to play a constructive role in the political settlement of the Syrian issue for peace and development in the Middle East, he added.

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