

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR KONSTANTIN DIMITROV
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA TO
THE OPCW
AT THE 29th SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO
THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

(The Hague, 25 - 29 November 2024)

Agenda item 8 - General debate

Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished Delegates.

The Republic of Bulgaria pays tribute to H.E. Ambassador Suljuk Mustansar Tarar of Pakistan, Chairperson of the 28th Conference of States Parties, and H.E. Ambassador Andrés Terán Parral of Ecuador, Chairperson of the Executive Council, for the outstanding performance in fulfilling their duties. We also warmly congratulate H.E. Ambassador Almir Šahović of Bosnia and Herzegovina for his election as the Chairperson of the 29th Conference of States Parties and assure him of our full support in steering the work of the Conference.

Mr. Chairperson,

Chemical weapons continue to pose a grave threat to international peace and security. The current global security landscape, re-emergence of chemical weapons use, emerging technologies and abandoned chemical weapons present major challenges for the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention in the post-destruction phase. The Republic of Bulgaria will continue to actively promote the full and effective implementation of the Convention, as well as its universalisation.

On 4 October 2024, the United Nations General Assembly First Committee overwhelmingly reaffirmed its strong support for the Convention and the OPCW in the annual resolution tabled by Poland. The resolution offers a unique opportunity for the international community to support implementation of the Convention, uphold the norm against the use of chemical weapons and stress that there will be no impunity for their

use. It is reassuring that year after year there is an unequivocal expression of support for the OPCW and its activities from all regions.

The Republic of Bulgaria expresses its full confidence in the Secretariat and commends the effective leadership of OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias. We welcome the confirmations that the Secretariat is monitoring all relevant situations and any allegations of use of chemical weapons that could arise, and stands ready to assist if requested, in accordance with the Convention.

Mr. Chairperson,

The retention and transfer of knowledge, skills and expertise, including through rehiring of former inspectors is critical to ensuring the Secretariat's capacity to respond to contingencies. We commend efforts, and emphasise the need for further progress, towards gender equality in the Organisation and for a more geographically diverse and representative Secretariat, while securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, and look forward to further progress in enhancing gender mainstreaming and the sharing of the results with States Parties.

The Republic of Bulgaria underlines the importance of enhanced interaction with all relevant stakeholders, including academia, chemical industry, non-governmental organisations and the youth and of ensuring their meaningful and broadest possible participation in the OPCW work.

Mr. Chairperson,

Continued non-compliance by the Syrian regime causes serious damage to the object and purpose of the Convention. More than 11 years after acceding to the CWC, its initial declaration is far from being complete and remains marred with gaps and inconsistencies. Recent DAT findings on unreported chemicals suggest a potentially even more extensive Syrian chemical weapons programme than known so far. Furthermore, chemical weapons use has been independently attributed to the Syrian regime on nine occasions by the thorough and comprehensive investigations carried out by the UN and the OPCW. Syria must fully and effectively cooperate with the OPCW and all its established mechanisms, including the Investigation and Identification Team.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Republic of Bulgaria reiterates its resolute condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a manifest violation of international law and the UN Charter. We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and its inherent right of self-defence against the Russian aggression. Russia – a permanent member of the UN Security Council – is responsible for grave violations of international law and international humanitarian law in Ukraine. It will be held accountable for its war of aggression and all the destruction and loss of life it causes.

We are seriously concerned by the growing number of reported use of Riot Control Agents by Russia as a method of warfare, which is prohibited by the Convention, as well as by the alleged use of choking agent chloropicrin against Ukrainian soldiers. Totally ignoring the legitimate international concern, Russia has not provided any credible answer on the RCA incidents pursuant to Article IX. Instead, it continues to evade providing clarifications and distorts facts with disinformation, such as falsely claiming that a national laboratory was mandated by the OPCW. The international community also still awaits a credible response from Russia on the poisoning of Mr. Alexei Navalny in August 2020.

Mr. Chairperson,

Russia's appalling track record of violating the UN Charter and war against another member of the Eastern European Group makes it unfit for a leadership position in our Organisation. An overwhelming majority of the EEG is not comfortable with the idea that Russia, an aggressor, would represent them in the Executive Council. The Republic of Bulgaria encourages Delegations to respect the will of the majority and support the candidacies of Czech Republic and Republic of North Macedonia.

I would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document of the Twenty-Ninth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you.