

Statement of the Czech Republic
at the Twenty Ninth Session of the Conference of States Parties
25th – 29th November 2024

Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General, distinguished delegates,

The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and would like to make a few remarks in its national capacity.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Your Excellency, Ambassador Almir Šahović of Bosnia and Herzegovina on your election as Chairperson of this session of the Conference of States Parties. You have full support of my delegation and we are confident that you will be able to steer our proceedings during the Conference towards a successful outcome. I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the work of H. E. Ambassador Suljuk Mustansar Tarar of Pakistan, Chairperson of the 28th Conference, during the past twelve months.

Also, I would like to take this opportunity to commend H. E. Director General Fernando Arias and the Technical Secretariat for all the hard and professional work during the intersessional period.

Mr Chairperson,

Czechia is a staunch supporter of the OPCW and a responsible member of this organisation. We are fully committed to uphold the norms of the Convention, as achieving the world free of chemical weapons is our common goal and our shared responsibility.

Ultimately, our actions speak for us louder than words:

Czechia provides long-term support to Assistance and Protection activities based on Article X of the Convention, both financially and in-kind, by voluntary contributions earmarked for the Africa programme and by conducting trainings with mostly African participants, from Uganda, Kenya, Burundi and Tanzania.

Some of you may have participated at a CSP side-event on Monday during the lunch break on these assistance cooperation activities that Czechia organised together with the UK and Switzerland. We were pleased to have participants from Brazil, Kenya and Uganda presenting their experience.

We recognize that the preparedness and response capacities of all States need proper care.

Therefore, we were also keen on providing training to enhance preparedness of participants from 18 OPCW Member States at the Assistance and Protection Sampling Course in the Czech Republic in September this year; namely: Algeria, Bangladesh, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Kenya, Lebanon, Lesotho, Mexico, Morocco, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Spain, Uganda, and the United Arab Emirates.

Furthermore, Czechia has also provided a voluntary contribution this year to help Ukraine with their response capacities in the event of a chemical incident.

We welcome all three technical assistance visits of the OPCW to Ukraine that delivered the necessary protective and sampling equipment and provided training to first responders on its use.

Mr Chairperson,

We are proud to state that our experts readily support the work of the Organisation through various subsidiary bodies, among others ABEO, ABAF, Confidentiality Commission and Validation group. In the past, we also provided inspectors to the Technical Secretariat and experts to SAB.

We consider the work of all these bodies crucial for efficient operation of OPCW and its further development. We must stay abreast with modern technologies and new developments in the area of science and technology. We must share knowledge on the peaceful use of chemistry and work of the organisation. We must inspire students to become young professionals in chemistry.

Retention and transfer of relevant knowledge, skills and expertise, and capacity building are crucial for the future of this Organisation.

We commend Germany and Morocco for organizing two highly important events on the Artificial Intelligence in the context of disarmament and non-proliferation this year. And, we highly appreciate the foresight, with which the Director General and his entire team have identified this topic as priority for next deliberations of this organisation.

Further, we support the revised draft programme and budget of OPCW for 2025. We commend the TS for its strict budgetary discipline, which allows, together with the 2022 cash surplus, reduction in the assessed contribution requirements for 2025. We acknowledge the need of the Organisation to dispose of necessary finances for carrying out its activities as well as providing security to its staff.

Mr Chairperson,

We all applauded the destruction of all declared chemical weapons as of July last year. Unfortunately, it has become painfully clear how important it is to prevent their re-emergence.

In that vein, Czechia is deeply concerned by the findings of the report issued by the OPCW Technical Secretariat on 18 November 2024, which confirms the presence of Riot Control Agents in samples collected in the Dnipropetrovsk region of Ukraine. We urge the Secretariat to further identify the origins and make an attribution of this deplorable breach of the Convention. The Director General and Technical Secretariat may rest assured of our unwavering support on this matter.

Indeed, the overall number of reports pursuant to Article IX para 3 of the Convention on use of the RCAs by Russia on the Ukrainian battlefield is staggering. The Convention explicitly and strictly prohibits such use.

A group of States Parties, including Czechia, also continues to call on Russia to clarify the situation. In our last verbal note of July 2024 we requested the Executive Council to assist in clarifying the situation related to these reports. Unfortunately, until today, we have not received any substantiated clarifications from Russia.

To the contrary, we have witnessed at the last EC yet another attempt by Russia to distort the truth, within a broader disinformation campaign. But, a lie, although repeated many times, will never become the truth. Let me commend the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat for their prompt clarification of all the Russian false allegations.

Let us not forget the case of Mr Alexei Navalny's poisoning in 2020, where we heard similar narratives. We deeply regret Navalny's tragic death this year and reiterate that Russia has not provided credible responses to his poisoning yet. We repeat calls on Russia to fully cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation.

Russia has further been involved in spreading disinformation regarding confirmed use of chemical weapons by Syria against its own population. International impartial and comprehensive investigation conducted by the UN-OPCW JIM and OPCW IIT attributed to Syria the use of chemical weapons on nine occasions. We resolutely condemn the use of chemical weapons by Assad's troops as well as ISIL or other non-state actors.

We remain committed to ensure accountability of all perpetrators of these illegal acts, the chemical weapons use. That is also why Czechia has recently joined discussions with some other States on how to enhance such criminal accountability.

Mr Chairperson,

Czechia appreciates the work of the OPCW on Syrian dossier. Unfortunately, after more than 10 years it could not have been closed due to the continued limited cooperation of Syria with the Technical Secretariat. Moreover, three new outstanding and very serious issues opened in July this year.

DAT has collected and analysed samples of undeclared toxic chemicals. Possibly, this is undeclared development, production, storage and weaponisation of several chemical warfare agents.

Cooperation is one of the cornerstones of the Convention and we continue to call on Syria to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat and provide a complete declaration.

Mr Chairperson,

It is our common responsibility to uphold the Convention and international law. To achieve that, all actors must actively engage. Czechia, as a reliable and responsible OPCW member and its staunch supporter, wishes to do just that - to engage actively in the work of the Organisation.

That is why, my government decided already at the beginning of this year as the first member of the Eastern European Group to submit a Czech candidacy for the membership of the Executive Council for the period 2025-2027. Similarly to our previous EC memberships, Czechia stands ready to provide a constructive input into our joint work, while remaining fully committed to the complete adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We count on the support of all States Parties.

Mr Chairperson,

I would like to ask that this statement be designated an official document of this Conference session and posted on both the external server and public website.

I thank you.