

LITHUANIA
STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR NEILAS TANKEVIČIUS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA TO
THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-NINTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Lithuania aligns itself fully with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. Allow me to add the following elements in my national capacity.

Lithuania commends the leadership of OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias and expresses its full trust in the effective and impartial work of the Technical Secretariat in implementing its functions under the Chemical Weapons Convention (Convention) in our degraded and unpredictable global security landscape.

[Let me equally extend the sincere reassurances of our delegation's full support and appreciation to H.E. Ambassador Almir Sahovic of Bosnia and Hercegovina, Chairperson of the Twenty-Ninth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.]

Mr. Chairman,

The international community, we, obliged by the Chemical Weapons Convention, have a shared responsibility to enforce the prohibition of chemical weapons. Therefore, we can not ignore the repeated use of chemical weapons in recent years, in particular in Syria, the United Kingdom, Russia and most recently – in Ukraine.

All these cases of chemical weapons use have traces of Russian presence. In January 2023, the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) reported Russia's military presence and cooperation with Syrian forces in Douma. This cooperation happened exactly at the time of the Syrian regime's chemical weapons attack on Douma in April 2018. Also in April 2018, the OPCW confirmed the findings of the United Kingdom relating to the identity of the toxic chemical when a Novichok chemical agent was used in an assassination attempt against Skripals. Evidence, including video of officers from Russia's General Staff Main Intelligence Directorate, showed the Russian responsibility. We also all remember very well a case of late Mr. Navalny, who was poisoned on the Russian soil with a nerve agent from the same group of chemical agents, Novichoks. Also, confirmed by OPCW TS, just as by German, French, and Swedish laboratories.

Lithuania wants to draw special attention to the TAV report, which was published by the TS on NOV18. We commend all the effort put by TS into preparing this report, but more importantly recognize all the effort and high professionalism behind this. Special thanks also go to Ukraine.

This said, the Report establishes clearly that riot control agents, explicitly banned by the Convention, have been used in and against Ukraine. This constitutes the grave violation of the Art 1 of the Chemical Weapons Convention, therefore must not go without being noted, recognized and properly acted upon.

This conclusion alone deserves further investigation and further action in line with the CWC.

In light of how groundbreaking the revelations of the TS is, Lithuania offered a draft Joint Statement for all the State Parties to endorse. We want to thank the co-sponsors and all the State Parties for their explicit support for this step, which is nothing else but a genuine expression of support to the CWC, which needs it like never before, and the reason why we are here. Bottom line is - CWC has been breached and now it is proven.

After saying this I must admit that it is particularly cynical that the Russian Federation has submitted its application for membership of the OPCW Executive Council for the period 2025-2027 from the Eastern European Group. And using this opportunity I would like to extend the full support of my country for the candidacies of Czechia and North Macedonia.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances. It is imperative to identify and hold accountable the perpetrators of those attacks. We commend every effort of the OPCW in this regard, these days in particular the Technical Secretariat's ongoing support to Ukraine under Art. X of the Convention that is aimed at strengthening the capacity and preparedness of Ukraine for prevention and protection with respect to chemical weapons related incidents. [I am proud to announce that Lithuania's voluntary contribution to the Trust fund for Assistance and Protection for Ukraine created under Art. X, is underway.]

Mr. Chair,

Lithuania is [also] a contributor to The Trust Fund for Syria Missions to support the Fact-Finding Mission and other remaining activities, because we believe in justice.

It has been over ten years since Syria acceded to the Convention and over three years since certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention were suspended. Still, an accurate declaration is nowhere in sight. Out of the 26 outstanding issues only 7 are resolved.

We further insist that Syria must cooperate and respond with urgency to the Technical Secretariat's requests as the continuous non-compliance undermines the objective and purpose of the Convention.

Mr. Chair,

We admit that the challenges to the Convention and the principles that underpin it are growing. The OPCW must also continue to deepen its focus on prevention, addressing new and existing threats, and increasing international cooperation, assistance, and protection. Therefore, a smooth approval of 2024-2025 budget is needed, as well as payment of assessed contributions in full and on time is necessary for effective functioning of the OPCW.

Mr Chair,

Lithuania continues to draw attention to the issue of sea dumped chemical weapons. Let me recall that last year's UN General Assembly Resolution, sponsored by Lithuania, once again received

common understanding and wide support among UN membership. Lithuania invites all member states to co-operate actively on this important matter.

On Tuesday, 26 November 2024, during the lunch break, a side-event on the sea dumped chemical weapons is organised by the delegations of Germany, Lithuania and Poland in Room **Oceania 2**. We are very happy that the number of interested parties is increasing every year and we look forward to seeing you there.

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

I thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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