

**The 29th Session of the Conference of the States Parties
General Debate
Statement by Ms. Hyejeong Ahn
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Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

At the outset, I would like to express my congratulations to Ambassador Almir Šahović of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on your assumption of the role of Chairperson of the 29th Conference of the States Parties. I assure you of my delegation’s full support and cooperation. I wish to express my appreciation to Ambassador Suljuk Mustansar Tarar of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for his outstanding endeavors over the past year.

I would like to thank Director-General Fernando Arias and all the staff members of the Technical Secretariat (TS) for their continued efforts to ensure the successful implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Mr. Chair,

Last year, we celebrated the historic milestone of the complete elimination of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles. However, achieving a truly chemical weapons-free world remains an elusive task. We are still exposed to the threat of undeclared chemical weapons, and we have even seen them used repeatedly around the world. To prevent any further re-emergence of chemical weapons, we must remain steadfast in upholding the norms and principles of the CWC. It is crucial that we hold accountable those who resort to the use of chemical weapons, ensuring that violations do not go unpunished and that the integrity of the Convention is preserved.

In this regard, we express our deep concern that the chemical weapons issues of the Syrian Arab Republic have remained unresolved for the more than 10 years since Syria’s accession to the Convention. The declaration submitted by Syria still cannot be considered accurate and complete considering the identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies.

We are particularly concerned about 19 outstanding issues, which involve potentially large quantities of chemical warfare agents, the production of which has not been declared to the TS. We strongly urge Syria to provide comprehensive information and fully cooperate with the TS to resolve all remaining outstanding issues and to comply with the Convention.

The Korean government reaffirms its unwavering support for the work of the OPCW Syria teams including the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), and the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). In particular, we appreciate the ongoing efforts by the Technical Secretariat to investigate the alleged incidents in an impartial and professional manner. We reiterate that chemical weapons must never be used by anyone, anywhere, at any time, under any circumstances, and that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine continues to pose a serious threat to global peace and security. We are deeply concerned about the reported potential use of riot control agents (RCA) by Russia against Ukrainian forces. We also raise grave concerns over the findings of the recent OPCW report on its Technical Assistance Visit to Ukraine. This report confirms presence of the riot control agents in the samples collected from the conflict front in Ukraine. Any use of chemical weapons, including the use of riot control agents as a method of warfare, is prohibited under the Article I of the Convention.

At the same time, we express our concerns about ongoing disinformation campaigns on chemical provocations. We reject any attempts to distort the facts and shift blame. Indeed, we remain committed to protecting the integrity of the Convention.

In addition, with regard to the use of a nerve agent of a Novichok group in poisoning Mr. Alexei Navalny in 2020, we urge Russia, in the territory of which the attack took place, to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to disclose all the circumstances surrounding this chemical weapon use.

Mr. Chair,

Given the growing spectre of misuse of toxic chemicals and chemical terrorism, the importance of chemical safety and security cannot be overemphasized. The Republic of Korea has been making utmost efforts to share its knowledge and best practices for the peaceful development and use of chemistry in the Asian region by co-hosting annual workshops with the TS in Seoul since 2012. The 12th Workshop was successfully held this November. And indeed, we reaffirm our commitment to contribute to further enhancing regional capacity in the chemical sector.

My delegation commends Germany and Costa Rica, the co-chairs of the informal consultations on the engagement with civil society, for their efforts in leading the consultations for more than a year. It is regrettable that the recommendations in the working paper were not adopted, but we are confident that it will serve as a good basis for further strengthening our cooperation with civil society in the future.

Furthermore, we appreciate the Director-General's initiatives to discuss the impact of emerging technologies in the implementation of the CWC and to strengthen the relevant capacity of the TS. We note with appreciation that the TS and Morocco co-hosted the Global AI Conference in October. The Republic of Korea, as a leading country in emerging technologies across military AI, cybersecurity, and advanced industrial sectors, is committed to actively contributing to the discussions on emerging technologies within the OPCW.

Last but not least, my delegation highlights the significance of ensuring the universality of the Convention. In order to secure the full effectiveness of the Convention even after the destruction of all declared chemical weapons, ensuring universality should be discussed as one of the priorities within the OPCW. In this regard, we urge the four remaining States not Party, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), to join as early as possible without any preconditions. We request that the TS enhance its readiness to welcome new members and strengthen its efforts to facilitate the engagement of States not Party.

Thank you. /END/