



Embassy of Finland
The Hague

**Statement by Finland
Ambassador Päivi Kaukoranta
Permanent Representative of Finland to the OPCW
Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW
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Mr. Chairperson, Mr. Director General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finland wishes to thank Ambassador Agustin Vásquez Gómez for his outstanding commitment and valuable contribution during his tenure as the Chairperson of the Executive Council. I would also like to thank the OPCW Director-General Ambassador Fernando Arias and his staff for their determination and efforts to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention. Let me reiterate my country's strong support to the OPCW Technical Secretariat. Finland has full confidence in the expertise, professionalism, impartiality and independence of the Technical Secretariat.

Finland aligns itself with the statement made by Portugal on behalf of the European Union. In addition, I wish to highlight a few issues from a national perspective.

Mr. Chairperson,

The use of chemical weapons in all circumstances, by anyone, anywhere and at any time is a violation of international law, a threat to international peace and security, and it seriously undermines principles of the rule-based international system. It is also an

abhorrent and heinous act with indiscriminate human consequences and may amount to the most serious crimes – war crimes and crimes against humanity.

We strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force as concluded by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) in April 2020. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria must be held accountable. IIT – with its findings and conclusions - plays an important role in the fight against impunity and it is a key element in ensuring accountability. We look forward to the release of the next IIT report. We are concerned about the continuing inconsistencies in the Syrian initial declaration and undeclared facilities, as described by the latest DAT report released last November. The draft Decision “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic (C-25/DEC/CRP.10) from November 2020 is a proper measure for the Conference of States Parties to take to respond to the clear violation of the Convention.

Alexei Navalny’s poisoning by a chemical nerve agent of the “Novichok” group was confirmed by specialised laboratories in Germany, France and Sweden, as well as by the OPCW. We call on Russia to undertake full, impartial, and transparent investigation of the assassination attempt in accordance with the obligations defined in Article VII of the Convention, which urges all States Parties to not permit in any place under its control any activity prohibited by the Convention. We were disconcerted that the Technical Assistance Visit originally requested by Russia and for which the OPCW Technical Secretariat demonstrated willingness and readiness to undertake did not materialize due to the withdrawal of the request by Russia.

Finland supports the draft decision “Understanding Regarding the Aerosolized Use of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes” presented by Australia, Switzerland and the United States. Given the risks involved, we find it important to make clear that the use of these chemicals for law enforcement purposes is prohibited under the CWC. We invite State Parties to extend their support for the decision.

We would like to express our appreciation and strong support for the Director-General's efforts to improve gender balance at the Technical Secretariat. We encourage further efforts to ensure an inclusive working environment that embraces equality. We look forward to hearing the findings and recommendations of the on-going gender audit of the Technical Secretariat.

To conclude, I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the external server and the public website.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.