

Statement by H.E. Ambassador René Miko, Permanent Representative of the
Czech Republic to the OPCW

at the One-Hundred Sixth Session of the Executive Council

9-12 July 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 use this opportunity to make a few remarks in its national capacity.

First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Excellency, dear Ambassador Teran Parral, on your election as the new Chairperson of the Executive Council and wish you every success in your new role. I am confident that your rich experience will help you in guiding successfully the work of the Executive Council and I would like to ensure you of our full support towards a positive outcome. We further would like to pay tribute to H.E. Ambassador Lucian Fătu of Romania for his most able leadership of the Executive Council during his chairmanship.

Allow me also to express our sincere appreciation for all the hard work of the Director General, Fernando Arias, and the Technical Secretariat. We reiterate our full confidence in you, Director General, and in your staff. We very much value your professionalism, impartiality, independence and immense technical expertise.

Mr Chairperson

Czechia remains gravely concerned about the increasing reports of possible use of Riot Control Agents by Russia on the Ukrainian battlefield. Czechia must stress yet again, that use of the RCAs as a method of war is strictly prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention. That is why we have joined Germany and other ten states to call upon Russia to clarify the situation. In our last Note Verbale of 1 July 2024 we all requested the newly constituted Executive Council to assist in clarifying the situation related to the reports pursuant to Article IX para 3 of the Convention. Russia has, like many others, ratified the Convention and pledged their full adherence to its stipulations.

Indeed, it is not the first time that we have been alerted to the chemical weapons use by Russia. Since 2020, this Organisation has been seized with the poisoning of Mr Alexei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader, by a chemical nerve agent of the Novichok group. Russia has never provided any answers to the questions posed by 45 States Parties, including Czechia. We repeat calls on Russia to fully cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation. The tragic death of Mr. Navalny by no means relieves Russia from its obligations.

Czechia commends the work of the OPCW on the Syrian dossier. We truly regret that, after so many years, it could not have yet been closed. We are concerned by the continued limited cooperation of Syria with the Technical Secretariat. Engagement on logistical aspects of the 27th round of consultations of the Declaration Assessment Team and providing insufficient information and no substantiating documents cannot be construed as a full-fledged cooperation. Cooperation is one of the cornerstones of the Convention. Therefore, we continue to call on the Syrian Arab Republic to fully and effectively cooperate with the Technical Secretariat and

provide a complete declaration. We are alarmed about the possibility of opening new issues based on the unexpected results of analysis of samples collected by DAT in 2020 and 2023, especially about possibly undeclared production, storage and weaponisation of chemical warfare agents.

This is all the more worrying as Syria has been attributed already on nine occasions with the use of chemical weapons. This was confirmed by, among others, the UN-OPCW JIM, and OPCW IIT after a comprehensive and thorough investigation. We resolutely condemn the use of chemical weapons by Assad's troops as well as ISIL or other non-state actors and we remain committed to ensure accountability of the perpetrators. Syria must immediately ensure full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention within its territory. In this context, we support the retention and transfer of knowledge, skills and expertise of the Secretariat to investigate allegations of chemical weapons use.

Mr Chairperson,

With respect to the capacity-building, Czechia is a long-term supporter of the OPCW protection and assistance activities based on Article X of the Convention. Our support is both financial and in-kind by providing voluntary contributions and conducting trainings respectively. We look forward to further cooperation with the Secretariat on enhancing the preparedness and response capacities of States in the event of a chemical incident or its threat.

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

I thank you.