



STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
BY H.E. AMBASSADOR DÁNIEL MIHÁLY HOROGSZEGI SZILÁGYI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF HUNGARY TO THE OPCW
AT THE 106th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(The Hague, 9 – 12 July 2024)

Agenda item 5 - General debate

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The Candidate Countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro and Ukraine as well as the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the EEA (European Economic Area) align themselves with this statement. Andorra, Monaco and San Marino also associate themselves with this statement.

The European Union commends the Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Lucian Fătu of Romania, for his wise and able stewardship of the Executive Council during his chairmanship. We also extend a warm welcome to the new Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Andrés Teran Parral of Ecuador, and assure him of our full support in steering the work of the Council. The European Union also commends the leadership of OPCW Director General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, and reiterates its full confidence in the OPCW Technical Secretariat, its professionalism, impartiality and well-established technical expertise in implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and tasks assigned by the States Parties.

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union is committed to promoting the full universalisation and effective implementation of the Convention. In line with our commitment, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation between the EU and the OPCW was signed in February this year. I am pleased to inform that the first regular high-level consultation took place on 14 May 2024 with a view to identifying synergies on present and future key areas in the implementation of the Convention.

The global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture - including the norm against the use of chemical weapons - is strong but it is being tested by a few States. The European Union welcomes the confirmations that the Secretariat is monitoring all relevant situations and any allegations of use of chemical weapons that could arise, and stands ready to assist if requested, in accordance with the Convention.

In this context we recall the decision C-28/DEC.12 adopted by the 28th Conference of the States Parties, and its provisions regarding the sustaining and building of the Secretariat's capabilities to investigate allegations of use of chemical weapons. The EU is ready to consider further support to the Secretariat's investigative activities and capacities so it remains alert and able to fulfil its tasks. The retention and transfer of knowledge, skills and expertise including through rehiring of former inspectors is critical to ensuring the Secretariat's capacity to respond to contingencies. We appreciate the efforts made by the Director-General for a more gender balanced, diverse and representative Secretariat, and look forward to further progress including in enhancing gender mainstreaming and sharing the results with States Parties.

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union reiterates its resolute condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a manifest violation of international law including the UN Charter. We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and its inherent right of self-defence against the Russian aggression. Russia will be held accountable for its war of aggression and all the destruction and loss of life it causes.

We take very seriously the growing number of reported use of Riot Control Agents by Russia as a method of warfare as well as alleged use of choking agent chloropicrin against Ukrainian soldiers. However, Russia has not provided credible answers in response to requests for clarifications on the RCA incidents pursuant to Article IX, paragraph 2 of the Convention. Twelve States Parties have therefore requested the Executive Council to assist in clarifying the situation pursuant to Article IX, paragraph 3.

This establishes an unfortunate pattern of Russia ignoring justified requests for clarification as Russia has also not provided any clarifications nor allowed an international investigation into the assassination attempt on Mr. Alexei Navalny in Russia in August 2020 by a nerve agent of the "Novichok" group. His tragic death in a Russian prison does not relieve the Russian Federation of its obligation to provide answers to the questions posed. We reiterate calls on Russia to fully cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation.

Mr. Chairperson,

Chemical weapons use has been independently attributed to the Syrian regime on nine occasions by the thorough and comprehensive investigations carried out by the UN and the OPCW. As a member of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, the EU is committed to ensuring full accountability for those responsible for these heinous crimes in Syria and beyond. The continued non-compliance of the Syrian regime causes serious damage to the object and purpose of the Convention.

More than ten years after Syria's initial declaration, numerous and important questions remain unanswered. Syria must fully and effectively cooperate with the OPCW and all its established mechanisms, including the Investigation and Identification Team. The European Union

reaffirms its strong support and appreciation for the professional, impartial and independent work carried out by the Secretariat on all aspects of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union underlines the importance of engaging with all relevant stakeholders, ranging from chemical industry to think tanks, civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations as well as the youth in the OPCW work. In this context, the EU commends the ongoing work guided by Costa Rica and Germany and the active participation of States Parties on reflections for enhanced interaction with Civil Society. We welcome progress made with a view to better capturing Civil Society knowledge and experience for mutual benefit as well as to ensuring their meaningful and broadest possible participation in the Conference of States Parties.

I would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document of this session and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

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