

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR THOMAS SCHIEB, PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATIVE OF GERMANY TO THE OPCW, AT THE 106th SESSION OF  
THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

(The Hague, 9 – 12 July 2024)

Mr. Chairperson, Director-General, distinguished Ambassadors and delegates,  
Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent  
Representative of Hungary on behalf of the EU.

We wish the Chairperson of the Executive Council, H.E. Ambassador Andres  
Teran Parral, all the best for chairing the Council's session in July. And we are  
looking forward to cooperating with the new members of the Executive  
Council.

Germany remains extremely concerned by clear indications that, in Russia's  
war of aggression against Ukraine, the use of Riot Control Agents by Russian  
Armed Forces is increasing in terms of scale and intensity. If confirmed, this  
would constitute a blatant violation of the CWC by Russia.

We started raising our concerns last year already, and have asked Russia, in line  
with the CWC, to respond. Since Russia failed to provide any convincing  
explanation, Germany requested, on behalf of 12 States Parties, the Executive  
Council to assist in clarifying the situation pursuant to Article IX para 3 of the  
CWC, shortly before its 105th session in March. Maintaining the request on  
behalf of the said 12 States Parties, Germany submitted another Note Verbale  
to this newly constituted Executive Council about a week ago.

Germany commends the Technical Secretariat for monitoring the situation in  
Ukraine closely. We also very much appreciate the Secretariat's ongoing work  
in providing equipment to Ukraine and in training Ukrainian experts in order to  
enable Ukraine to respond to contingencies brought about by Russia's  
aggression.

For an organisation tasked with ensuring compliance with the CWC, dealing  
with such very serious and repeated allegations of a State Party breaching the  
very first, central article of the Convention has to have absolute priority!

Russia has failed to answer straight-forward questions regarding clear indications that it was acting in violation of its obligations under Article I of the Convention. We have seen this unacceptable pattern in this Organisation for a number of years now. Questions pertaining to Article IX of the Convention were addressed to Russia when the Skripals were poisoned with a nerve-agent from the so-called Novichok group, and they were addressed to Russia when Alexei Nawalny was poisoned with a Novichok nerve-agent. In both cases, Russia never fulfilled its obligations under the Convention to clarify these cases of alleged use. Please note that I am using the term “alleged use” because this is the formal language of the Convention. However, for Germany, there can be no reasonable doubt that the Russian government bears full responsibility for both poisonings.

With regard to Syria, Germany would like to thank the Technical Secretariat for its comprehensive briefing on the file on June 27<sup>th</sup>, including on the 27<sup>th</sup> round of technical consultations of the DAT. Unfortunately, we learned that there has been no progress whatsoever in terms of clarifying the open questions still pertaining to the Syrian regime’s initial declaration. On the contrary, we were told that, yet again, new issues of concern have come up. This not only confirms but increases our doubts about the full termination of Syria’s chemical weapons programme. It is as sad as it is worrying that Syria still does not fully comply with its obligations under the CWC and relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

Germany commends the DAT-, IIT- and FFM-Teams for their professionalism and commitment. It is of critical importance that the TS retains the expertise and knowledge it has gathered in deploying its non-routine missions over the years, including with regard to sustaining and building its capabilities to investigate allegations of use of chemical weapons.

Germany would like to thank the DG for the key note speech he delivered at a conference on “AI and Weapons of Mass Destruction” organized by the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin on 28 June, in which he shared his thoughts and ideas on the risks and opportunities of AI. The exchanges at the conference among first-rate international experts and government representatives covered a lot of ground and identified a number of important aspects, including the implications of AI lowering the technological threshold for state and non-state actors to develop chemical agents in connection with other emerging and rapidly developing technologies such as molecular design and synthesis.

It goes without saying that the discussions on these complex issues need to continue. This is why we are very much looking forward to another high-level conference in Rabat in October, organized jointly by Morocco and the TS, on the implications of AI for the CWC. Germany is confident that the Rabat conference will be able to build on the results of the Berlin conference, and has contributed 65.000 EUR to its realization.

Let me emphasize that Germany appreciates the early engagement of the TS under the leadership of the DG to address the challenges posed by emerging technologies and AI in particular. The workshop on AI in April, hosted by the DG at the CCT, produced important results that help to inform the continuing discussions at the OPCW on these complex issues.

In this context, the contributions of the SAB will remain of critical importance. Having this in mind, we would like to suggest that the EC should have the opportunity to discuss the SAB's recommendations in a proper way instead of simply taking note of them.

It is clear that the topic of "emerging technologies" will remain high on the OPCW's agenda for the years to come. This is why we would deem it a good idea to put it as a regular item on the EC's agenda.

"Emerging technologies" shows how important the input of and the exchange with external experts are to the work of the OPCW, be they scientists or industry representatives. With this in mind, the informal consultations, currently co-chaired by Germany and Costa Rica, have continued with the objective of making the ongoing interaction with civil society, including academia and chemical industry, even more meaningful and productive. We appreciate the engagement of States Parties, including many members of the Executive Council, and we call on them to continue constructively supporting this process.

Concluding, I would like to commend the Director-General, H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias, and the Technical Secretariat for ensuring the effective implementation of the mandate of the OPCW. The Director-General and the Technical Secretariat can continue counting on Germany's unwavering support and active role in promoting the work of the OPCW.

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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