

Norwegian statement at the 106th session of the Executive Council

General Debate

By H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen

Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Norway

Mr. Chair,

Mr. Director-General,

Distinguished Colleagues,

The Chemical Weapons Convention was set up to save humanity from the horrors of chemical weapons use. History has shown only too well what immeasurable suffering the use of chemical weapons causes. As members and observers to the OPCW's Executive Council, we have all committed ourselves to ridding the world of chemical weapons. The states we represent have voluntarily signed on to a convention which includes privileges, duties, and responsibilities. Full cooperation with the OPCW's Technical Secretariat is one of the duties we have all taken on freely. It is paramount that we all take this duty seriously.

Chemical weapons use should be something we speak of in the past tense only. But sadly, this is not the case. Chemical weapons are still being used, something which has been clearly documented and debated in this room over the past years.

Mr. Chair,

Norway has repeatedly – and in the strongest possible terms – condemned Russia's despicable and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine. We are alarmed by reports that the frequency of Russia's chemical attacks against Ukrainian forces is increasing, as is the variety of chemical munitions that Russian forces are using on the battlefield. The use of chloropicrin as a chemical weapon and the use of Riot Control Agents as a method of warfare is in blatant violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Norway welcomes the OPCW's engagement with Ukraine and the announcement of a Technical Assistance visit. We commend the Secretariat's readiness to provide equipment and training to Ukraine to assist with preparedness to respond to contingencies. Norway has earmarked 5 million NOK to OPCW's work in Ukraine, and we continue to stand in support and solidarity with the Ukrainian people as they defend themselves against continued Russian military aggression.

Russia has a lamentable track record of failing to account credibly for its use of chemical weapons: The attacks against the Skripals in the United Kingdom in 2018 and the attack on Mr. Aleksei Navalny in Russia in 2020 remain cases in question. Norway shall continue to pay tribute to Mr. Navalny for his courage and strength of conviction. He paid the ultimate price as he died in prison after having chosen to return to Russia from hospital in Germany, knowing full and well what fate might await him.

Mr. Chair,

Norway is grateful to the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team, to the Declaration Assessment Team and to the Fact-Finding Mission for the work these entities do to achieve progress in the various parts of the Syria file. Norway deeply regrets the consistent failure of the

Syrian Arab Republic to comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and to cooperate with the OPCW to resolve all its outstanding issues. Only Syrian authorities are in the position to complete the measures necessary to lift the suspension of Syria's rights and privileges as a State Party to the Convention.

Norway firmly rejects the allegation by some state parties that the creation of the Investigation and Identification Team was illegitimate. On the contrary: The establishment of the IIT was in full accordance with the rules and procedures set out in the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Convention explicitly foresees majority voting if consensus is impossible to find.

Norway has previously welcomed the statement by Director-General Fernando Arias that the OPCW is monitoring the situation in Gaza and any allegations of use of chemical weapons that could arise. We express our deep sympathy with all victims of war and terrorism in Palestine, in Israel, in Ukraine and in all other regions torn by armed conflict.

Mr. Chair,

We must ensure that women are part of decision-making bodies at all levels, and that the rights and needs of women are recognized, in line with Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. We should also facilitate interaction between civil society, private sector and the OPCW. External stakeholders, such as chemical industry associations, NGOs, think tanks, academia and others can provide invaluable input to the advancement of the Chemical Weapons' Convention.

Mr. Chair,

Full cooperation with the Technical Secretariat is a duty all states parties have voluntarily taken on when signing on to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Convention remains an important instrument in the global security architecture, and the OPCW is part of a rules-based multilateral international order. It is more important than ever that we all stand up in defense of this order. Norway remains a fervent supporter of the OPCW. We have full confidence in the professionalism, expertise, impartiality, and dedication of the Technical Secretariat. We extend our warm thanks to Director-General Fernando Arias and his entire team for the contribution they make to global security and effective multilateralism.

Thank you.