



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JOŽEF DROFENIK, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SLOVENIA TO THE OPCW AT THE 106TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

General Debate

Mr. Chairperson, Director-General, distinguished colleagues,

I join others in thanking H.E. Ambassador Lucian Fătu of Romania for his able stewardship of this Council during the past year, and in welcoming the new chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Andrés Teran Parral of Ecuador. Rest assured, Sir, of our cooperation and support.

Slovenia's main views are aptly captured by the statement made on behalf of the European Union, to which we fully subscribe. I would like to make the following additional remarks.

We're gravely disappointed that after a decade of international efforts and repeated pledges of cooperation, Syria remains non-compliant with the Chemical Weapons Convention. Large quantities of chemical weapons and munitions in Syria are still unaccounted for, and the Declaration and Assessment Team continues to uncover evidence that additional – as of now undeclared - sites have been used for the production of chemical weapons in Syria. How much was produced in secret, and where are these dangerous chemicals now? This is the question that concerns us all.

International investigations have proven that Syrian armed forces have used chemical weapons at least nine times in the past decade. Only credible answers to the open questions, substantiated by evidence, can alleviate fears that these weapons may cause further devastation in the future.

I once again urge Syria to reveal the full extent of their chemical weapons programme, as is its obligation, and submit it to the CWC verification regime.

Mr. Chairperson,

History has shown us that unchecked use of prohibited weapons leads to more use of prohibited weapons. We are concerned that this is proving true in Ukraine, where Russian forces have been escalating their use of riot control agents for military purposes. Ukraine has recorded about 3000 cases. Not 30. Not 300. 3000. Worse, the number of cases has grown exponentially in the course of this year, indicating that this is now part of systematic, wide-spread military tactics of Russian forces.

Article 1 of the CWC expressly prohibits the use of riot control agents as a method of warfare. By using them, Russia is violating international law.

Once again, we call on Russia to respect the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Once again, we call for accountability for all use of chemical weapons – be it in Syria, in Ukraine, in Russia, or elsewhere. Only by calling those responsible to account can we deter future use. This Council has an important role to play in this regard.

As does the OPCW as a whole. We commend, in particular, the work of OPCW Syria teams in gathering, analysing and preserving evidence of chemical weapons use. We also welcome the assistance and protection programmes extended to Ukraine, including on the collection and preservation of evidence.

We look forward to seeing the knowledge and capabilities of the OPCW to investigate chemical weapons use, no matter where and by whom, further developed in the future.

Mr Chairperson,

We appreciate the Director-General's efforts to explore the risks and potentials of new and emerging technologies, and in particular of artificial intelligence, to the implementation of CWC. It's important for the organization to remain fit for purpose, and to prepare for foreseeable challenges as much as possible.

We also look forward to the further mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all areas of the work of the OPCW.

I ask that this statement be considered as an official document, and posted on Catalyst and the OPCW public website.

Thank you.