



STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF HUNGARY TO THE OPCW
AT THE 107th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(The Hague, 8 – 11 October 2024)

Agenda item 5 - General debate

Mr. Chairperson,

Director-General,

Distinguished guests,

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 Andrés Teran Parral of Ecuador, for his wise stewardship and assure him of our full support in steering the work of the 107th Session of the Executive Council.

Mr. Chairperson,

The re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons poses a significant threat to international peace and security, and the global norm against the use of chemical weapons is being undermined by certain States. Full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention's (CWC) obligations, ensuring accountability and ending impunity are crucial to defending and upholding the established international norms. The EU supports collective efforts to ensure accountability for perpetrators of chemical attacks, including through the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

Continued non-compliance by the Syrian regime continues to cause serious damage to the object and purpose of the Convention. More than a decade after Syria's initial declaration, and despite international concerns, numerous and important questions remain unanswered. Recent DAT findings suggest a potentially even more extensive Syrian chemical weapons programme than known so far. We once again recall that 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. Syria must fully and effectively cooperate with the OPCW and all its established mechanisms, including the Investigation and Identification Team.

In this context I am pleased to inform that on 15 July this year, the European Union has decided to support the strengthening of the Secretariat's non-routine capacities to investigate allegations of use of chemical weapons with a new voluntary financial contribution of EUR 1.6 million. The contribution will also facilitate the transfer of collected evidentiary information to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) with a view to enabling international accountability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

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 – a permanent member of the UN Security Council – is responsible for grave violations of international law and international humanitarian law in Ukraine. It will be held accountable for its war of aggression and all the destruction and loss of life it causes.

We are seriously concerned by the huge number of reported use of Riot Control Agents by Russia as a method of warfare, which is prohibited by the Convention, as well as by the alleged use of choking agent chloropicrin against Ukrainian soldiers. Ignoring the legitimate international concern about the issue, Russia has not provided any credible answer on the RCA incidents pursuant to Article IX, paragraph 2 of the Convention. Therefore, twelve States Parties have requested the Executive Council to assist in clarifying the situation pursuant to Article IX, paragraph 3. Russia's continued evasion of providing clarification is unacceptable. We call on Russia to strictly comply with its obligations under the Convention. In this context, the EU welcomes the technical assistance and protection support provided by the Technical Secretariat to Ukraine.

August 20 marked four years since the assassination attempt of Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny in Russia by a nerve agent of the "Novichok" group. Together with its partners, the European Union will continue to repeat its call on Russia to investigate the assassination attempt in full transparency and without further delay, and to fully cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation.

Mr. Chairperson,

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union 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 Convention and tasks assigned by the States Parties. The EU 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.

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 commend efforts, and emphasise the need for further progress, towards gender equality in the Organisation and for a more geographically diverse and representative Secretariat while securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, and look forward to further progress in enhancing gender mainstreaming and the sharing of the results with States Parties.

I would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document of this session.

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