



STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
BY H.E. AMBASSADOR STEPHAN KLEMENT
SPECIAL ENVOY FOR DISARMAMENT AND NON-PROLIFERATION
EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE
AT THE 29th SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO THE
CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
(The Hague, 25 - 29 November 2024)

Agenda item 8 – General debate

Chairperson,

Director-General,

Distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro and Ukraine as well as the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, 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 (EU) pays tribute to H.E. Ambassador Suljuk Mustansar Tarar of Pakistan, Chairperson of the 28th Conference of States Parties, and H.E. Ambassador Andrés Terán Parral of Ecuador, Chairperson of the Executive Council, for the outstanding performance in fulfilling their duties. We also warmly congratulate H.E. Ambassador Almir Šahović of Bosnia and Herzegovina for his appointment as the Chairperson of the 29th Conference of States Parties and assure him of our full support in steering the work of the Conference.

Mr. Chairperson,

Chemical weapons continue to pose a grave threat to international peace and security. The current global security landscape, re-emergence of chemical weapons use, emerging technologies and abandoned chemical weapons present major challenges for the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in the post-destruction phase.

For its part, the European Union will continue to actively promote the full and effective implementation of the Convention, as well as its universalisation. As a concrete sign of our commitment, the EU helps to finance key OPCW activities such as capacity building and laboratory twinnings. I am pleased to inform of a new voluntary financial contribution of EUR 1.6 million to support the strengthening of the Secretariat's non-routine capacities for investigating allegations of use of chemical weapons.

On 4 October 2024, the United Nations General Assembly First Committee overwhelmingly reaffirmed its strong support for the Convention and the OPCW in the annual resolution tabled by Poland. The resolution offers a unique opportunity for the international community to support implementation of the Convention, uphold the norm against chemical weapons and stress that there will be no impunity for their use. It is reassuring that year after year there is an unequivocal expression of support for the OPCW and its activities from all regions.

In this context, the EU expresses its full confidence in the Secretariat and commends the effective leadership of OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias. We welcome 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.

Mr. Chairperson,

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.

The EU underlines the importance of enhanced interaction with all relevant stakeholders, including academia, the chemical industry, non-governmental organisations and the youth and of ensuring their meaningful and broadest possible participation in the work of the OPCW.

The EU commends Costa Rica and Germany for the informal, open consultations held with active participation of States Parties to streamline the accreditation process and to provide much needed clarity to the guidelines for the mutual benefit of States Parties, the Secretariat as well as the Civil Society.

Mr. Chairperson,

Continued non-compliance by the Syrian regime causes serious damage to the object and purpose of the Convention. More than 11 years after acceding to the Convention, its initial declaration is far from being complete and remains marred with gaps and inconsistencies. Recent DAT findings on unreported chemicals suggest a potentially even more extensive Syrian chemical weapons programme than known so far. Furthermore, 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. The EU is committed to ensuring full accountability for those responsible for these heinous crimes in Syria and beyond, including through the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

Mr. Chairperson,

The EU 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, including international humanitarian law in Ukraine. We remain committed to holding those responsible accountable for their atrocities against the people of Ukraine, in line with international law.

Ignoring the legitimate international concern, Russia has not provided any credible answers pursuant to Article IX of the Convention on the growing number of reported uses of Riot Control Agents (RCA) as a method of warfare by its forces in Ukraine. Instead, it continues to evade providing clarifications and distorts facts with disinformation, such as falsely claiming that a national laboratory producing propaganda against Ukraine was doing this mandated by the OPCW. In this context, the EU expresses deep concern regarding the findings of the TAV report issued on 18 November 2024 which confirms the presence of riot control agent "CS" in

samples collected in in the Dnipropetrovsk region of Ukraine. We are hoping for a timely attribution of the RCA munition collected.

The international community also still awaits a credible response from Russia on the poisoning of Mr. Alexei Navalny in August 2020.

Mr. Chairperson,

Russia's alarming track record of violating the UN Charter and the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as its war against another member of the Eastern European Group makes it unfit for a leadership position in our Organisation. An overwhelming majority of the EEG is not comfortable with the idea that Russia, an aggressor against another State Party of the same region, would represent them in the Executive Council. This is a question that concerns us all. The European Union encourages Delegations to respect the will of the EEG majority and support the candidacies of Czechia and North Macedonia.

I would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document of the Twenty-Ninth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you.

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