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POLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MARCIN CZEPELAK
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND TO THE
OPCW AT THE NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

At the outset, let me reassure Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador of the continuous engagement and support of this delegation for the Chairperson of the Executive Council as well as for the efforts of the Executive Council Bureau. Aligning with the European Union statement, I would like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

First, Poland reiterates its concern that threats and challenges related to the use of chemical weapons persist and continue to undermine key goals and objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”). This requires our joint and resolute response. We need to do our utmost in order to ensure full compliance, of each and every State Party, with the Convention. It is a fundamental matter for the OPCW’s credibility and—in a broader sense and longer perspective—of the future of the whole chemical disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Against this background, Poland supports the draft decision of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties (Part I) (C-25/DEC/CRP.10) recommending actions to be taken to address implications stemming from the first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) on the attribution of responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Accordingly, we are looking forward to the release of the next IIT report in the near future. The conclusions from the last Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) report are also worrisome and alarming. The report underlines again that despite so many efforts made over the past years to verify the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic, the efforts have brought little result with gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies related to declaration remain unresolved, and as a result, it cannot be considered accurate and complete. These elements have to be obviously taken into account during the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties (Part II) in April 2021 while considering the above-mentioned draft decision.

Equally important is to react adequately to the latest use of toxic chemical—military-grade nerve agent of the novichok group—as a weapon against a Russian oppositionist Mr Alexei Navalny. This is yet another breach of the Convention that we simply cannot ignore. Poland as an Executive Council member reiterates its strong condemnation of this heinous attack on Mr Navalny and stresses that those guilty of the attempted murder, with the use of prohibited



chemical warfare agent, must be brought to justice. It is an absolute necessity to conduct a thorough and transparent investigation in this regard. The withdrawal, on 16 December 2020, of the Russian Federation's request for an OPCW technical assistance visit seems to be a step in the opposite direction.

Second, it remains our firm belief that the Organisation has to continue its considerations and efforts to effectively adapt to dynamic, unforeseen international developments, underpinned specifically by the COVID-19 pandemic. For this very reason, Poland is continuing its support for discussions regarding some flexibility in organising sessions and meetings by the OPCW in emergency situations, similar to efforts undertaken by many other international organisations.

As to the future, we are persistently promoting further considerations on the OPCW role as a platform for consultations and collaboration on issues related to the scope and objective of the Convention. In this context, we see a merit in moving forward this week, after many years of discussions initiated by Australia and Switzerland, with our efforts related to the prohibition under the Convention of the use of aerosolised central nervous system-acting chemicals (CNS-acting chemicals) for law enforcement purposes. Last but not least, together with some other States Parties we would like to see a new dynamic in discussing the matter of sea-dumped chemical weapons and the consideration of concrete steps leading to minimising related threats and concerns. From Poland's perspective, the nature and challenges related to the matter definitely require more attention and engagement both at national and international level, including the OPCW.

Thank you.

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