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SLOVENIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SANJA ŠTIGLIC
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA TO THE
OPCW AT THE NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

While fully subscribing to the statement on behalf of the European Union, Slovenia would like to offer the following additional remarks.

We are dismayed and appalled by the continued use of chemical weapons in recent years. In particular, in the Syrian Arab Republic, where investigations carried out by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) have confirmed the involvement of a State Party in chemical weapon attacks on the civilian population.

Regrettably, the Syrian Arab Republic did not comply with the Executive Council decision (EC-94/DEC.2 of 9 July 2020) requesting it to redress the situation. It therefore falls upon the international community to take appropriate action to urge the country's full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention"). In this connection, Slovenia fully supports the proposed Twenty-Fifth Session of Conference of the States Parties draft decision on "Addressing the Possession and use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" and calls on all other States Parties to do the same. We furthermore welcome the continued work of the IIT as an important step towards accountability and look forward to their next report.

We reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to ensure a full and transparent investigation into the poisoning of Alexei Navalny with a chemical nerve agent of the novichok group, and to bring those responsible to justice. In this respect, we regret the decision of the Russian Federation to withdraw its request to the OPCW for technical assistance.

This Executive Council has been debating the issue of the aerosolised use of central nervous system-acting chemicals (CNS-acting chemicals) for law enforcement purposes for many years. Slovenia believes it is now time to take action on it.

The Convention prohibits the use of toxic chemicals—that is chemicals that can cause death, temporary incapacitation or permanent harm—and their precursors, except where intended for purposes not prohibited under the Convention, and as long as the types and quantities are consistent with such purposes. The latter conditions are not met by CNS-acting chemicals.



In its many studies over the years, the Scientific Advisory Board has determined that CNS-acting chemicals are toxic chemicals, not riot control agents. Some of them are as lethal as nerve agents, and none of them have a sufficient margin of safety when used in aerosol form, where their dose cannot be controlled.

Aerosolised use of CNS-acting chemicals cannot be compared to their use in controlled environments, for example in medicine. Used as incapacitants, they can cause death, temporary incapacitation or permanent harm during or after exposure.

It is therefore our clear understanding that such use would be inconsistent with law enforcement purposes as a “purpose not prohibited” under the Convention and should be prevented.

As one of the initial supporters of the draft decision on CNS-acting chemicals, I would like to express our great appreciation to all States Parties who have already indicated their support for the decision and express hopes that the remaining ones will also endorse action on this important topic.

Mr Chairperson, Slovenia appreciates the recent improvements in the technical capabilities of the OPCW, including with respect to the conduct of virtual meetings when conditions do not allow for in-person sessions. We look forward to the continuation of this process, including through the so called “business continuity initiative”.

To conclude, I wish to reiterate our full support to the dedicated work of the Technical Secretariat under the leadership of Director-General Fernando Arias, and thank them for carrying out their mandated taskings with professionalism and integrity even in challenging circumstances.

Thank you.

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