

**SPAIN****STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE KINGDOM OF SPAIN
TO THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

Spain aligns itself with the declaration made by the European Union and published for the occasion of this Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council.

First and foremost, my delegation would like to welcome the effective work of the Council Chairperson, Ambassador Agustín Vázquez Gómez, who has undertaken his duties with responsibility and a spirit of service in the very challenging conditions caused by the pandemic. His effective work has shone during the convening of the prior Council sessions, at which reports were adopted, and agreements were reached in order to overcome differences at the heart of the Organisation.

After becoming a member of the Executive Council nearly one year ago in May 2020, Spain has worked loyally together with its partners in the European Union with two main goals in mind, which are to carry out its obligations under the Convention, and to support the Director-General, Mr Fernando Arias, as well as the Technical Secretariat so that it may fulfil its mandate as assigned to it by the 193 members of the OPCW, and which can be summarised in just one phrase: a world completely free of chemical weapons.

Following the inclusion of chemical agents in the novichok family in the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention, many countries believed that cases like the inexcusable attack in Salisbury that took place nearly two years ago had definitively become a thing of the past and would not happen again. Unfortunately, our hopes have not come to pass/, as demonstrated by the poisoning of Mr Navalny.

In these past five months, the situation has not only not improved, but has actually become worse. The three facts that we had mentioned in our national statement from the Ninety-Fifth Session of the Council remain outstanding: that the chemical that was used is from the novichok family, that the victim is a Russian national, and that the attack took place on the territory of the Russian Federation.

These facts cannot and should not be ignored. For this reason, the Government of the Russian Federation has the unavoidable responsibility to conduct an honest, exhaustive, and transparent investigation into the matter.

My delegation regrets that the Government of the Russian Federation has withdrawn its request for technical assistance that it made to the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to cooperate in



the investigation in this matter. Spain, consequently, again reiterates its call to the Russian Federation for close cooperation with the Technical Secretariat, to conduct an in-depth investigation in which all human and technical resources necessary are put to use, and then share the information obtained with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and the countries that are signatories to the Convention.

After careful study and consideration of its text, a few months ago Spain decided to co-sponsor the draft decision presented by the delegation of the United States in pursuit of the inclusion of aerosolised central nervous system-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes in the Annex on Chemicals.

If this draft is again submitted for consideration at this Council, Spain will continue to co-sponsor it and support it, as it understands that it is a very important initiative towards the total eradication of potentially lethal chemical agents that could be used against people and, of course, with the exception that my country does not oppose the use of said chemicals for medical, pharmaceutical, or agricultural purposes.

With this support for the North American initiative, Spain wishes to reiterate the willingness that it expressed at the start of this national statement: the fervent desire for a world free of chemical weapons.

We trust that this draft declaration will bring together the number of votes necessary at this Executive Council, allowing us, in a relatively short period of time, to modify the Annex on Chemicals as specified.

Spain wishes to reiterate its concern surrounding the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. We continue to ascertain the limited or lack of cooperation of the Government of Damascus with the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation in terms of everything related to the declaration and inspection of its chemical stockpiles.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria constitutes a threat to the international community, which is why any obstacles hindering investigative efforts are not acceptable. Spain supports the Technical Secretariat and the Director-General and all of their efforts taken towards achieving full compliance with the Convention on the part of the Syrian authorities, with the ultimate objective being the elimination of any trace of chemical weapons in the country.

Aside from the lack of cooperation on the part of the authorities of Damascus with the Technical Secretariat on the matters of declaration and investigation, we cannot forget the work of the Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) in the Syrian Arab Republic. As has become clear following the decision adopted at the Ninety-Fourth Session of the Executive Council in July, Syria is meant to respond to the attacks carried out by its Air Force in Ltamenah. My delegation hopes that the report of the Technical Secretariat on the response of the Government of Syria regarding the facts determined by the IIT will be made available as soon as possible, and trusts that at the next Conference of the States Parties, the necessary measures will be adopted against the Syrian regime to ensure that these events cannot take place again.

The abilities of the OPCW to confront the challenges stemming from advances in science and technology, or the risks posed by terrorist use of chemical agents is relative to how the OPCW's capacities are maintained and improved in both human and material terms. For this reason, support for projects such as the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology are of special

importance, as they will contribute to ensuring that the OPCW is in better condition to meet its commitments and able to support the Member States as needed. We call for the Member States that are able to do so to continue to make voluntary contributions towards this end.

Likewise, Spain highly values the efforts of the Organisation to put into place more modern and efficient cybersecurity mechanisms, which are necessary due to recent cyberattacks against the Technical Secretariat originating in foreign countries.

The Convention and the OPCW are one of the axes around which the international non-proliferation system operates. The obligation of all countries that are a part of the Convention is to protect and improve the non-proliferation structure. The field of chemical weapons is one that has progressed the most, both in terms of declaration, as well as in inspection, control, and destruction. However, much work remains to be done; from here, the Organisation will need our continued support in order to achieve its goals.

Finally, Mr Chairperson, Spain wishes to reiterate its support and express its total confidence in the work being carried out by the Technical Secretariat, the coordinator of the IIT, Ambassador Oñate, and the Director-General, Fernando Arias. We congratulate them all on their work and we encourage them to continue on this path in future.

My delegation would like this national statement to be considered an official document of the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council and included on the Organisation's extranet and website.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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