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**SWITZERLAND**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR HEINZ WALKER-NEDERKOORN  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION  
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION  
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,

Allow me to join previous speakers in thanking you, as well as the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”), for your efforts in preparing this year’s Conference of the States Parties (“the Conference”). Let me assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

Chemical weapons continue to represent a serious threat to international and human security. It is essential that the universal prohibition of these weapons be upheld and that all States that have not yet acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) do so as soon as possible. It is also fundamental that all States Parties fully implement and comply with the provisions of the Convention.

In its second report (S/1943/2021), the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) convincingly concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force under the control of the Tiger Forces used at least one chemical weapon in eastern Saraqib on 4 February 2018. Switzerland condemns in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons and underlines once again that their use is reprehensible, violates international law, and is prohibited to all actors at all times and under all circumstances. Those responsible must be brought to justice.

My Government very much welcomes the steps that were taken by the Conference at its Twenty-Fifth Session in response to the IIT’s findings, through the decision on “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (C-25/DEC/CRP.10). In full compliance with the provisions of the Convention, a clear majority of States Parties agreed to respond to the repeated violation of Article 1 of the Convention by the Syrian Arab Republic. Nevertheless, the Secretariat assesses that the initial declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete, since of the 24 outstanding issues identified by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) since 2014, 20 gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies remain unresolved (EC-99/DG.2). We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the OPCW, and to grant it unfettered access to its territory and to all relevant information.



Likewise, the use of a nerve agent of a novichok group in the attack against Alexei Navalny, as confirmed by the OPCW on the basis of the analytical results of its designated laboratories, continues to be of grave concern. Switzerland once again calls on the Russian Federation to launch a transparent and impartial criminal investigation to hold those responsible to account, and to fully cooperate with the OPCW and the international community.

Switzerland maintains high respect and confidence in the work of the OPCW, the Secretariat, and the Director-General. In order to ensure the Organisation's effectiveness, we must continue to support it both politically and financially. My Government therefore fully endorses the Programme and Budget for 2022–2023 as well as the renewal of the mandate of Director-General Arias.

Switzerland is convinced that it is necessary to affirm States Parties' understanding that the aerosolised use of chemicals acting on the central nervous system (CNS) is inconsistent with law enforcement as a "purpose not prohibited" under the Convention, in order to safeguard its integrity. My Government welcomes the decision taken by the Executive Council in this regard (EC-96/DEC.7) and calls on all States Parties to support the draft decision of the Conference at its Twenty-Sixth Session that addresses the risks posed by the aerosolised use of CNS-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes. Fifty States Parties have joined us as co-sponsors and many more support our endeavour. If adopted, the decision would constitute a crucial step in mitigating new interest in the use of the toxic properties of chemicals as weapons, and thus the re-emergence of chemical weapons in armed conflict.

The OPCW Laboratory performs key functions and is of critical importance for the effectiveness and integrity of the Organisation's verification regime. Switzerland commends the Secretariat for the progress made with the construction of the ChemTech Centre, which will play an important role in ensuring that the OPCW has the technical and scientific capabilities to face future challenges

Before I conclude, Mr Chairperson, my delegation wishes to put on record our concern about the accreditation process for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to attend this Conference. The refusal of a small number of States Parties to accredit NGOs, whose activities are demonstrably relevant to the object and purpose of the Convention, is unacceptable. NGOs play an essential role in addressing current and future challenges and achieving our common goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

Thank you.

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