



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

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ESTONIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LAURI KUUSING
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,

Estonia aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. We wish to commend the OPCW Technical Secretariat and Director General Fernando Arias, for their efforts in ensuring continuity in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Estonia fully supports the appointment of H.E. Mr Arias for his second term in office.

Estonia reiterates its full confidence in the objectivity, impartiality, and independence of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) and underlines the complementarity of its work with that of the United Nations. They have been under intense scrutiny and targeted by a systematic and state sponsored disinformation campaign but have shown nothing less than integrity and dedication to the task of upholding the norm against the use of chemical weapons. Estonia, as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, appreciates the regular sharing of information of the OPCW activities and investigations, both with the United Nations Secretary-General and the United Nations Security Council. In this connection, during the Estonian Presidency of the Security Council in 2021, we organised a briefing of the Security Council by Director-General Fernando Arias.

We should not forget that chemical weapons are a particularly gruesome and indiscriminate type of warfare. This is the reason that they were comprehensively outlawed by the Convention. The re-emergence of chemical weapons in recent years, such as the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force, is a disturbing illustration of this. Therefore, the overwhelmingly adopted decision by the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to suspend the voting rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic for its failure to comply with the Convention sent a strong message by the international community. Impunity, tolerance, and inaction cannot be an option when chemical weapons are used against civilian populations. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to engage in good faith and constructively with the Technical Secretariat to achieve progress. Returning to full compliance with the Convention, as set out in the decision C-25/DEC.9, must remain a priority.

The circumstances surrounding the chemical weapon attack on Russian territory against a Russian citizen continue to remain unclear. The use of chemical weapons by anyone—be it a State Party or a non-State actor—anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances is a



violation of international law and can amount to the most serious crimes of international concern. Any use of these weapons must be investigated and impunity for their use must not and will not be tolerated. Russia's unwillingness to agree with the OPCW Technical Secretariat's standard terms of reference for a technical assistance visit to take place is a step away from bringing perpetrators of this heinous act to justice. We continue to call on the Russian Federation to cooperate with the OPCW and the Conference of the States Parties to disclose fully and in a transparent manner, the circumstances of the poisoning of Mr Navalny with a chemical nerve agent of the novichok group.

Estonia has been consistent in supporting the notion that the aerosolised use of central nervous system-acting chemicals (CNS-acting chemicals) in certain law enforcement scenarios poses a serious challenge for the Convention. We therefore call upon all States Parties to support adopting the draft decision "Understanding Regarding the Aerosolised Use of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes" (C-26/DEC/CRP.1) at this session of the conference.

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

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