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LITHUANIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR VIDMANTAS PURLYS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA TO THE
OPCW AT THE NINETY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Lithuania aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Luis Vassy, Permanent Representative of the French Republic to the OPCW on behalf of the European Union and would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

Today we witness with horror a war in Europe. An independent sovereign country—Ukraine—is under a blatant military attack. An unprovoked and unjustified attack. It is a fact that Russia is grossly violating international law and putting in danger millions of people of a peaceful nation, including by shelling residential areas, attacking and taking over civilian infrastructure, and greatly increasing the risk of accidents involving industrial chemicals. We stand together with Ukraine in fighting back against the aggressor and we will continue our support.

Witnessing Russia's numerous violations of international law and norms today, we cannot also forget the blatant violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention") by Russia in the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny, who was poisoned in the Russian Federation by a military grade chemical nerve agent of the novichok group in August 2020. There were many calls on the Russian Federation to fully disclose the circumstances of the assassination attempt, including answering very concrete questions in the framework of Article IX. Instead, Russia simply chose to continue spreading its false narratives and baseless accusations.

I must say that the absence of cooperation from the Russian side will not discourage our determination to ensure that the global norm of prohibiting the use of chemical weapons is not compromised and that there is no impunity for those responsible for such heinous attacks. We take Alexei Navalny's case as a lead to question whether the Russian Federation fulfils its obligations under the Convention.

The global norm of prohibiting the use of chemical weapons has also been compromised in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Syrian Arab Air Force used chemical weapons in three separate attacks on its territory in 2017 and again in 2018. The Conference of the States Parties addressed these breaches of international law and suspended certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic. The recent reports from the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) again confirm the use of



chemicals as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, in Marea in 2015 and in Kafr Zeita in 2016. Next reports from the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) are also expected in the near future.

The suspension of certain rights and privileges is likely to stay for longer than we had hoped for because of the continued failure to comply with the Convention, the most recent issue being Syria not complying with its obligation to allow full and unfettered access to OPCW personnel. As a result, access of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to Syria remains an issue.

Lithuania has full trust in the OPCW's leadership and commends the professional manner in which the Technical Secretariat carries out its work in the Syrian Arab Republic. We strongly support the work of the DAT, the FFM, and the IIT.

We are co-sponsoring the draft "Proposal for an Executive Council Decision to Allow for Convening Executive Council Meetings or Sessions in Emergency Circumstances" launched by Germany. Our work must not be interrupted under any circumstances. We commend the efforts of the German delegation in trying to reach consensus on the draft decision and we welcome the new co-sponsors joining this initiative.

It is with great interest that we observe the advancement with building the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre). As it will be key to enhancing the OPCW's capacity to perform its tasks, we are keen to explore the possible ChemTech Centre's role in eliminating the threat posed by the sea-dumped chemical weapons.

We continue to lend our full support and confidence to Director-General Fernando Arias for his able leadership, commitment, and hard work. We have full confidence in the professionalism and impartiality of the OPCW's Technical Secretariat. Lithuania truly commends your work.

We ask that this statement be made an official document of the Executive Council and published on the external server and the public website of the OPCW.

Thank you.

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