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UKRAINE

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MAKSYM KONONENKO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF UKRAINE TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We are in unprecedented times in the recent history of the world.

Along with a massive build-up of Russian military forces in recent months, we have seen the Kremlin and pro-Kremlin media in Russia spread false and misleading narratives about Ukrainian aggression against certain districts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. These premeditated and calculated efforts to accuse Ukraine of endangering the lives of people in the territories of Eastern Ukraine, temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation, then served as a pretext for Russia to violently invade our country on 24 February. This is a gross violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Back in December 2021, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu claimed that United States' private military firms were preparing biochemical components to provoke fighting in Eastern Ukraine. On Russian state television, terrorist Eduard Basurin went further and even identified the biochemical component in question as Botulinum toxin. Another terrorist—Denis Pushilin—stated that Donetsk's water supply would be poisoned.

Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby categorically denied the allegations during a press briefing that same day. "Those statements by Minister Shoigu are completely false", he said. Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Oleg Nikolenko also denied the allegations and stated that such messages are simply the latest examples of Russian disinformation campaigns. Last Thursday, 3 March, Russian Minister Lavrov was again making false allegations about chemical and biological laboratories in Ukraine. We reject these lies as set out in our note verbale to the OPCW on 27 February 2022.

According to the intelligence information from the temporarily occupied Donetsk, the occupiers are handing out gas masks to local militants and the Russian military. There is a possibility of provocation, such as blowing up industrial tanks with chemicals.

Russia would then most likely accuse the Ukrainian military of this sabotage against the civilian population. We declare that, unlike the Russian occupiers, Ukraine does not use such methods. We do not have any chemical weapons and—unlike Russia—we would never use them.



Ukraine is a strong supporter of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”), which is widely recognised as the first multilateral instrument, banning the entire class of weapons of mass destruction under strict and efficient international control and compliance mechanisms.

Let me remind the Russian Federation that according to Article I:

Each State Party to this Convention undertakes never under any circumstances:

- (a) To develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons, or transfer, directly or indirectly, chemical weapons to anyone;
- (b) To use chemical weapons;
- (c) To engage in any military preparations to use chemical weapons;
- (d) To assist, encourage or induce, in any way, anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party under this Convention.

According to Article IX, a State Party shall have the right to request the Executive Council to assist in clarifying any situation which may be considered ambiguous or which gives rise to a concern about the possible non-compliance of another State Party with this Convention. We ask the Executive Council to follow this situation closely.

My country reserves the right to request assistance and protection, as provided for in Article X of the Convention, should we be threatened with chemical weapons use.

My country is in grave peril, under constant attack by Russia and with many civilian casualties. Should chemical weapons be used, we will ask for help with establishing the facts on the territory of Ukraine. Russia must be held to account.

Today, let me express my appreciation for all the statements of support from OPCW Member States about the situation in Ukraine. We are very grateful for the strong international support.

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