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LATVIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR AIGA LIEPIŅA
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA TO THE
OPCW AT THE NINETY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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

Latvia aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

Today we are facing the most dramatic and tragic developments on the European continent since World War II. Latvia condemns in the strongest possible terms the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine. By its illegal military actions, Russia is grossly violating international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter and undermining European and global security and stability. Russia bears full responsibility for this act of aggression and all the destruction and loss of life it will cause. It will be held accountable for its actions.

Latvia demands that Russia immediately ceases its military actions, unconditionally withdraws all forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine, and fully respects Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence within its internationally recognised borders.

The information provided by the Permanent Representation of Ukraine to the OPCW via Note Verbale No. 61219/30-196/50-3 dated 27 February 2022, raises concerns that Russian armed forces may be preparing "false flag" provocations in Ukraine using chemicals, including the explosion of industrial tanks filled with chemicals, involving the exposure of the population to dangerous chemicals.

Such provocations or false accusations by Russia would be irresponsible and could have serious humanitarian consequences, not only for the Ukrainian population but also for the environment. In the event of such an incident, Russia alone would bear the responsibility.

It is very alarming to observe the amount of disinformation being spread by Russia as of late in order to falsely accuse Ukraine of misconduct. Latvia deplores all of these Russian disinformation efforts. Latvia highly appreciates the initiative by the Permanent Representation of the United States of America to organise a seminar whereby Russian disinformation activities in various domains would be revealed.



Latvia once again urges the Russian Federation to disclose and to explain credibly the circumstances of the assassination attempt against Mr Alexei Navalny, who was poisoned in Russia by a military nerve agent of the novichok group in August 2020. Impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not be tolerated. It is of high importance that those responsible for the assassination attempt on Mr Navalny must be brought to justice. Latvia will support all efforts in this regard.

Latvia strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force in Ltamenah in March 2017 and in Saraqib in February 2018, as concluded by the Investigation and Identification Team reports. Latvia welcomes the issuing of the two reports of the Fact-Finding Mission and takes note of their conclusions confirming the use of chemicals as weapons in Marea on 1 September 2015, and Kafr Zeita on 1 October 2016, respectively.

Latvia commends the work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) with respect to the Syrian chemical weapons programme. Regrettably, Syria has not demonstrated its willingness to cooperate in good faith with the Secretariat. Therefore, Latvia urges Syria to engage constructively with the Secretariat, to provide all relevant documents and information in order to update its initial declaration and redress gaps and inconsistencies, and to grant visas for all OPCW personnel in a timely manner, in accordance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118.

To conclude, Latvia would like to take this opportunity to express gratitude to the Director-General for steering the Organisation and ensuring the implementation of the Convention during these challenging times caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Thank you.

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