



Embassy of Finland
The Hague

Statement by Finland

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Permanent Representative of Finland to the OPCW
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Madame Chairperson, Mr. Director General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finland wishes to thank Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki for his dedication, commitment, and contribution during his tenure as the Chairperson of the Executive Council. We thank Ambassador Gudrun Lingner of Germany for her efforts in the preparatory work for the 99th Session. We would also like to thank the OPCW Director-General Ambassador Fernando Arias and his staff for their determination and efforts to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention. I reiterate Finland's strong support to the OPCW Technical Secretariat. We have full confidence in the expertise, professionalism, impartiality and independence of the Technical Secretariat in the implementation of the Convention and other tasks assigned to it by the States Parties.

Finland aligns itself with the statement made by France on behalf of the European Union. In addition, I wish to highlight a few issues from a national perspective.

Finland strongly condemns Russia's attack on Ukraine. It is a flagrant violation of international law. We firmly support Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Russia's military actions target Ukraine but are also an attack on the entire European security order. Russia should cease military operations immediately.

We denounce groundless statements by Russian officials, notably regarding allegations to commit provocations with chemical components in Ukraine. In this context, we note with concern information contained in the Ukrainian Note Verbale, dated 27 February 2022, that the Russian armed forces may be preparing “false flag” provocations in Ukraine using chemicals.

Finland condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons in all circumstances, by anyone, anywhere, and at any time. The use of chemical weapons undermines international peace and security and constitutes a violation of international law, in certain circumstances it amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Addressing the threat from chemical weapons use is essential for upholding international norms related to chemical weapons use. We do not tolerate impunity for the use of chemical weapons and we continue to support collective efforts to ensure accountability for perpetrators of chemical attacks, including through the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

In April 2021, the 25th Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention suspended certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic. The decision was a consequence of the Syrian regime’s failure to respect its international obligations under the Convention as confirmed by thorough investigations undertaken by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team, Fact Finding Missions, the Investigation and Identification Team as well as the Joint UN-OPCW Investigation Mechanism. The decision sends a strong message against impunity for the use of chemical weapons. We hope that it also provides the Syrian Arab Republic a path to compliance with its obligations under the Convention.

Finland expresses its deep concern over the conclusions of the latest FFM reports, which confirm the use of chemicals as weapons in Marea, on 1 September 2015, and in Kafr Zeita on 1 October 2016. We thank the Technical Secretariat for their work on all aspects of the Syrian chemical weapons programme and strongly support the continuation of this very important work.

Finland reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of the use of a chemical nerve agent of the “Novichok” group to poison Alexei Navalnyi on the territory of the Russian Federation in August 2020. We are very concerned that thorough and transparent investigation into the assassination attempt has not taken place. We yet again urge the Russian Federation to disclose and credibly explain the circumstances of this chemical weapons use and to comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Full cooperation with the OPCW is imperative.

We express our appreciation and strongly support the Director-General’s efforts towards a more gender balanced, diverse, and representative Technical Secretariat. We encourage further efforts to ensure an inclusive working environment that embraces equality. This should include progress updates on the implementation of the Gender and Diversity Audit’s recommendations. We welcome the efforts to amend the OPCW Tenure Policy and support the German initiative on Executive Council business continuity.

To conclude, I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the external server and public website.

Thank you, Madame Chair.