

The 99th Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW
General Debate
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Yeondoo Jeong
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the OPCW

8 March 2022, The Hague

Madam Chair,
Mr. Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

I greatly welcome the assumption of the post of Chairperson of the Executive Council by Ambassador Eniola Olaitan Ajayi of Nigeria. I have every confidence that the 99th Session of the Executive Council will indeed yield tangible outcomes under her able leadership. And I assure my delegation's full support. I also convey my appreciation to Vice Chairperson Ambassador Gudrun Lingner of Germany for her able guidance of the preparatory work of this Session. We appreciate her tremendous role as acting Chairperson.

I take this opportunity also to thank Director-General Fernando Arias and all the staff members of the Technical Secretariat for their outstanding efforts to ensure full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) even in the midst of the on-going challenges brought by the pandemic.

Madam Chair,

The Korean government strongly condemns Russia's armed invasion against Ukraine as a violation of the fundamental principles of the UN Charter. Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence must be respected. As a responsible member of the international community, the Korean government will support and join the international community's efforts to curb armed invasion and resolve the situation peacefully. We call on Russia to immediately cease all military actions, withdraw all its forces from the Ukraine territory and to comply with its obligations under all relevant international law.

In the same vein, the Republic of Korea emphasizes once again that the use of chemical weapons cannot be tolerated anywhere, anytime, by anyone or under any circumstances. All those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

Madam Chair,

My delegation welcomes the recent publication of the two reports by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria. We are gravely concerned over their conclusions that there are reasonable grounds to believe that chemical weapons were used in Syria, respectively in Marea in October 2015 and in Kafr Zeita in October 2016.

My delegation commends the work of the Technical Secretariat including the FFM, the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) and the sincere efforts to investigate relevant incidents in a transparent, independent, impartial, and professional way. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic, as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, to immediately take necessary actions to redress the situation and come into compliance with the Convention, as requested by the Conference of the States Parties (CSP) Decision C-25/DEC.9 (21 April 2021) supported by the Republic of Korea as a co-sponsor.

In particular, we note with concern regarding the report by the Technical Secretariat that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and that necessary consultations between the Syrian Arab Republic and DAT are being seriously delayed. We strongly call on Syria to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat to address all outstanding issues and ensure that Syria-related OPCW missions can again embark upon their important tasks without delay.

Madam Chair,

The use of a nerve agent of a Novichok group in poisoning Mr. Alexei Navalny in August 2020 remains unaddressed. It is still a cause of serious concern for all States Parties. In this regard, the Republic of Korea urges the Russian Federation, on whose territory the attack took place, to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat to disclose all the circumstances surrounding this use of a chemical weapon transparently and impartially.

Madam Chair,

As potential threats are evolving with developments in the field of chemistry, there are growing calls for the enhancement of capacity to fully address them in timely manner. Against this backdrop, we are pleased to see the construction of the new Centre of Chemistry and Technology is well on track in accordance with the schedule. We trust that the new Centre can serve as a bedrock to nurture the overall capacity of the States Parties and OPCW to tackle

future challenges. As the first State Party to have made voluntary contributions to the initiative in 2017, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its continued commitment to support the project.

Madam Chair,

At the 26th Conference of States Parties (CSP) last year, States Parties of the Convention took another significant step to counter potential chemical threats – the adoption of the decision on Understanding Regarding the Aerosolised Use of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals (CNSAC) for Law Enforcement Purposes, which Korea has supported as a co-sponsor. My delegation welcomes the adoption of the decision and looks forward to further in-depth discussions regarding this important matter.

Madam Chair,

Sharing of knowledge and best practices regarding chemical safety and security at the regional level is a key means for every State Party to fully implement the Convention and to strengthen regional cooperation on the field. Indeed, it is in recognition of this that the Republic of Korea has, on an annual basis since 2012, been hosting the Seoul Workshop with the Technical Secretariat with a view to helping States Parties in the Asian region build their capabilities and capacities in chemical safety and security. The 9th Workshop was successfully held on-line last December and we look forward to hosting the next Workshop this year – and we very much hope it may be in-person.

Madam Chair,

Universal adherence to the Convention remains a top priority to guarantee the effectiveness of the full implementation of the Convention. Convinced that universality is critical in ensuring full implementation of the Convention, the Republic of Korea calls on the four remaining States not party to the Convention to join it without any preconditions and delay. We also express our support for the Technical Secretariat as it continues with its efforts to achieve this critical goal at the earliest possible time.

Madam Chair,

Finally, I welcome the establishment of an open-ended working group for the preparation of the Fifth Review Conference. The Fifth Review Conference to be held in 2023 will be a valuable opportunity to take stock of and recognize key achievements on the path we have traveled and identify outstanding challenges on the path ahead as well. In this regard, I look

forward to the States Parties pooling their wisdom for the successful preparations of the Review Conference through this Working Group.

Madam Chair,

In closing, I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this Executive Council Session and be published on the OPCW website and external server.

Thank you. /END/