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**SWITZERLAND**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR HEINZ WALKER NEDERKOORN  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION TO THE  
OPCW AT THE 100TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

Switzerland welcomes the establishment of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference and the successful commencement of its work, and thanks its Chairperson, Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia, and the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) for their tireless efforts in ensuring a substantial and thorough preparatory process. My country is fully committed to this process and will actively engage in it.

The two latest reports of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) regarding the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria once again draw disturbing conclusions. After a thorough, impartial, and professional investigation, the FFM confirmed that the evaluation and analysis of all available information provides reasonable grounds to believe that toxic chemicals were used as weapons, both in Marea on 1 September 2015 and in Kafr Zeita on 1 October 2016.

The Swiss Government is gravely concerned about these findings. Switzerland condemns in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons by anyone and under any circumstances. Such acts constitute a serious violation of international law and a war crime within the context of an armed conflict. The international community needs to take resolute action to ensure that those responsible on all sides of the conflict are held accountable and brought to justice. Impunity for these crimes is simply unacceptable.

With regard to the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Secretariat assesses that it still cannot be considered accurate and complete, as gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies identified by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) remain unresolved. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the OPCW, including with the DAT and FFM, and to provide the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) with unrestricted access to its territory and all relevant information. Complying with the decisions of the States Parties is not optional. Switzerland fully supports the IIT’s mandate and has absolutely no doubt about its legality and legitimacy—nothing in the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention) precludes an attribution role for the Organisation.

Switzerland thanks the OPCW for its hard work under difficult conditions and wishes to express its greatest appreciation. We reiterate our full confidence in the work and findings of the Secretariat, which has consistently carried out its missions within the context of the FFM, DAT, and IIT in a professional and impartial manner and in full respect of its mandate.



Switzerland condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's military aggression against Ukraine and calls upon Russia to de-escalate the situation immediately, to cease all hostilities, and to withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory without delay. The allegations made by Russia against Ukraine regarding chemical weapons are not credible. The documents presented do not allow for any conclusions in this regard and in part contain information that is already publicly known and that was communicated transparently. Switzerland condemns these unsubstantiated allegations. Ukraine is a long-standing State Party to the Convention that has acted constructively and with commitment and that fully complies with its obligations. It is rather Russia itself that has failed to respect its obligations.

In the case of the substantiated 2020 poisoning of Alexei Navalny with a nerve agent of the novichok group, Russia failed to initiate an independent investigation and to cooperate with the OPCW, though it has an obligation to do so under the Convention. According to credible findings, the British authorities established that Russia is responsible for the 2018 novichok nerve agent attack on Sergei Skripal. Moreover, Russia denies the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian armed forces, despite the fact that numerous independent international investigations by the United Nations and the OPCW have proven this. In this context, Russia is actively seeking to undermine the credibility of the OPCW and the international norm against the use of chemical weapons. If Russia were seriously interested in credibly clarifying the allegations, it could have used the existing mechanism under Article IX to shed light on the alleged violations of the treaty.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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