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GERMANY

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR GUDRUN LINGNER
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY
TO THE OPCW AT THE 100TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished colleagues,

In this Executive Council, we come together to work for the best possible implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention) for the hundredth time. This is a highly symbolic number. In many philosophical writings and spiritual texts from different regions of the world, you can find that the number 100 signifies completion and fulfilment; it symbolises the ending of something together with the beginning of something new. Indeed, we have completed very important steps in the past 99 Executive Councils, for example by strengthening accountability in cases of chemical weapons use. Our achievements in the past brought us closer to the aim of the Convention: to free the world of chemical weapons. However, challenges remain, and new ones arise, so our work is far from completed. For all of us, the number 100 should only have one meaning: 1 Convention, 0 Use and 0 Chemical weapons. Only once we can put into practice this particular understanding of the “magic 100” we can diminish our efforts.

Germany is strongly committed to further engage in the fight against chemical weapons. When Director-General Fernando Arias visited Berlin on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on 29 April 2022, Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock reiterated Germany’s determination to support the OPCW in facing current challenges to the Convention. In Director-General Arias’ different exchanges with high-ranking representatives of the German Government, the shared understanding of our future tasks became very clear: The success of the Convention over the past quarter century is the result of the commitment of its States Parties, and all stakeholders will need to play their part in order to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons also in the future.

Unfortunately, we had to take note of several confirmed cases of chemical weapons use in the past years, most importantly in Syria, the United Kingdom and Russia. After a particularly horrific use of sarin against the civilian population of Ghouta in August 2013, which killed over 1400 civilians, Syria was requested by the United Nations Security Council to join and implement the Convention. Several following decisions by the OPCW policy-making organs clearly defined the path for Syria to comply with this request. Consequently, Syria committed itself to declare and destroy all chemical weapons held by the government. Unfortunately, Damascus has never delivered on this obligation, and to this day, it continues to refuse effective



cooperation with the OPCW, as we could all read in the last report on this from the Director General (EC-100/DG.13). Due to this Syrian lack of cooperation, it is still not possible to clarify all gaps, discrepancies, and inconsistencies noted in the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration and subsequent submissions. Since April 2021, the work of the Secretariat has additionally been hampered by the Syrian refusal to issue the visa for all OPCW experts of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). Germany deeply regrets that the Syrian Arab Republic is clearly non-compliant with its obligations under paragraph 7 of Article VII of the Convention as well as paragraph 7 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) and other relevant OPCW decisions. Germany also notes that Damascus has not even tried to come into compliance with the Convention by completing the steps defined in the decision of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties of April 2021 (Addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic, C-25/DEC.9). As long as Damascus' stance of non-compliance will last, Syria will not be able to regain full rights and privileges under the Convention. We urge the Syrian Government to finally come to accept its obligations.

Germany also wishes to applaud the Technical Secretariat and the Director-General for their tireless efforts to enable progress on the dossier of chemical weapons in Syria. The work of the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) reflects integrity, professionalism and perseverance by highly competent OPCW experts. They are not to blame for the lack of progress on the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria. We are grateful for the work of these experts and look forward to the coming reports by FFM and IIT.

Furthermore, Germany notes with grave concern a similar refusal to comply with the Convention which is currently reflected in decisions taken by the Russian Federation. The use of a chemical nerve agent against Mr. Alexei Navalny on 20 August 2020 on Russian territory has still not been addressed by the Russian authorities as prescribed by the Convention. Together with 45 States Parties, Germany has asked the Russian Federation, in the formal framework of Article IX of the Convention consultations, for explanations regarding the poisoning of Mr Navalny. However, the Russian Federation has neither given any plausible explanation of this incident nor started a formal investigation. Germany recalls that Russia is obliged under Article VII of the Convention to criminalise, and consequently to investigate and punish any suspected use of chemical weapons on its territory.

Since the Russian Federation started an unjustified, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, Russian officials have made repeated unsubstantiated claims that Ukraine is using or is preparing to use chemical agents in Ukraine. Further baseless allegations have been made about other States or even the OPCW Technical Secretariat supposedly supporting chemical weapons 'provocations' in Ukraine. Germany categorically denounces this completely unfounded Russian disinformation campaign. We consider it unacceptable to levy such false accusations against Ukraine, a State Party that is in full compliance with its international obligations under the Convention, contrary to the Russian Federation.

Germany also deplores Russia's reckless military attacks in the direct vicinity of civil chemical facilities in Ukraine. We condemn any acts compromising the safety of these facilities and reiterate the paramount importance of safeguarding such facilities and preventing the risk of dangerous substances and materials being released. Together with many more concerned States Parties, Germany welcomes that the OPCW Technical Secretariat is monitoring the situation,

particularly around declared chemical industrial sites in Ukraine. Moreover, Germany is very proud to have been one of the first States Parties to immediately supply Ukraine with requested protection, sampling and detection equipment, as well as supplies for medical treatment in case of a chemical weapon attack. Much as we hope that all these supplies will never have to come into use, it is crucial that Ukraine is prepared for any eventuality.

Mr Chairperson, twenty-five years after the entry-into-force of the Convention, States Parties have begun last month preparing the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Fifth Review Conference), scheduled for May 2023, starting a dedicated Open-Ended Working Group under the able leadership of the Ambassador of Estonia. Germany is eager to engage in the OEWG and looks forward to exchanging with other States Parties on how to uphold the Convention, particularly in the face of repeated chemical weapons use. States Parties must discuss how to better react to cases of non-compliance and protect the Convention.

Germany is grateful for the important input given by the Technical Secretariat on verification related issues on 21 June 2022. We believe that with regard to verification modalities, States Parties must integrate into the verification processes the important evolution that science and the chemical industry worldwide have undergone in the past decade. Technical and scientific capacities have progressed immensely, and we must ensure that the way chemical production facilities are inspected is still fit for the purpose of the Convention.

Let me conclude by giving you a very brief update on the business continuity initiative, started by Germany at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Another round of consultations has taken place on 27 June 2022, and as a result, a cross-regional group of States Parties including Germany tabled a further refined draft decision (Rev.2). All members of the OPCW Executive Council are strongly encouraged to join consensus and to support the adoption of this decision so that we can ensure the functioning of the Executive Council even in circumstances when no in-person meetings are possible. Thank you.

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