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POLAND

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND TO THE OPCW AT THE 100TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mr Chairperson,

Poland fully supports the European Union statement delivered by the Czech presidency in the general debate. We congratulate H.E. Ambassador Ziad Al Atiyah, Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia, on taking up the responsibility of steering the work of the Executive Council.

The 100th Session of the Executive Council is the second meeting of the Council taking place since Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine that started in late February. The initial shock and disbelief that a full-scale war has returned to Europe has changed to horror, as the world started to learn about war atrocities committed by the Russian army "liberating" the people of Ukraine from peace and their lives.

Poland joins others in condemning—in the strongest possible terms—Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine, which grossly violates international law and the United Nations Charter, and undermines international peace and security. We stand united and in solidarity with the Ukrainian nation in their right to self-defence against the Russian aggressor and to fight for their country, their freedom, their families, and their homes.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine is multifaceted. One of its aspects is the Kremlin's campaign of disinformation and unsubstantiated and unfounded allegations against Ukraine and others. Part of this disinformation concerns the possible use of chemical weapons. While accusing Ukraine of preparing provocations, the Russian Federation takes deliberate steps to endanger the Ukrainian population by targeting civilian industrial facilities and chemical plants and intentionally producing a real risk of exposure to toxic chemical agents. Whatever the Russian propaganda says, one thing is clear, Russia is the aggressor here. It is Russia and only Russia who is responsible for the ongoing conflict, violence, and suffering. While Ukraine is a responsible member of the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention) and is in full compliance with the Convention, Russia has used chemical weapons in the recent past in assassinations and assassination attempts.

The States-Parties need to send a strong message that there is no—nor will there ever be—impunity for the use chemical weapons. It must be crystal clear that the OPCW has tools at its disposal to attribute the use of chemical weapons. As in case of Syria, the States Parties are determined to uphold the norm of zero tolerance for the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances. Should such irresponsible and dangerous actions take place those responsible will have to face serious consequences.



Apart from the military aspect of Russia's attack on Ukraine, there is also a political dimension that has already made its heavy mark on international relations. It concerns, amongst others, Russia's role and position in international organisations, including the OPCW. By its own brutal actions, by trampling on international obligations and commitments, including those enshrined in the United Nations Charter which strictly prohibits the use of force or its threat, by targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure Russia has lost its credibility as a responsible and trustworthy partner. How can we trust a country that says one thing and does something totally opposite, that starts a war in order to "establish peace", blames others for its own actions, and uses international law 'à la carte', only when it suits its political narrative? How can we trust that the Russian Federation will act in good faith in the OPCW? We cannot.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the threat of use of chemical weapons by Russian troops and Russian-backed separatists have marred the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry-into-force of the Convention, which we celebrated on 29 April 2022. It was a sober reminder that freeing the world of chemical weapons cannot be taken for granted and the observance and implementation of the Convention should be seen as a long-standing commitment, rather than a one-time action.

The threat of re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons and the existing challenges in the implementation of the Convention should only reinforce our commitment to uphold its principles in letter and spirit. Poland will continue to play its constructive role in this regard, supporting the Convention and the OPCW in every possible way.

In this context, we should like to inform the States-Parties that on 25 May 2022 the OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias, at the invitation of the Foreign Minister of Poland Mr Zbigniew Rau, paid an official visit to Warsaw where he participated in extensive consultations with Polish senior officials. The visit offered a chance to discuss a whole range of issues related to the implementation of the Convention and the functioning of the OPCW, and also the current threats and challenges. One of the topics discussed was the persisting problem of the sea dumped chemical weapons and the possibility of a greater involvement of the OPCW in dealing with this threat - a matter that Poland is highly interested in and would like further discussions on with the States-Parties in light of the ongoing preparatory work for next year's Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Fifth Review Conference).

Using this opportunity, Poland would like to thank the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference, H.E. Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia, and the Members of the Bureau, for organising the work of the OEWG in an open, transparent, and inclusive manner. You can count on the constructive participation of the Polish delegation in the meetings.

Please consider this statement as an official document and post it on the OPCW external server and public website. Thank you.