



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR HENK COR VAN DER KWAST
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NETHERLANDS
TO THE ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS
EC-101, 4 – 7 October 2022**

The Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

We commend the Chairperson H.E. Ambassador Ziad Al Aliyah of Saudi Arabia for the excellent way he is steering the work of the Council. The Netherlands once again expresses its full confidence in and support for Director General Fernando Arias and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW.

The *unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine* continues and the Russian Federation continues to spread disinformation, including allegations about possible use of chemical weapons by Ukraine. The war against Ukraine is a gross violation of international law, undermining the international rules-based order and the principles of multilateralism and the Russian Federation should be condemned in the strongest possible terms for starting this war. The Netherlands will do all in its power to preserve the international rules-based order.

The OPCW is a vital element of that order and has made a tremendous contribution to it since its inception. The Netherlands would like to congratulate the organisation for its continued efforts. We look forward to the further strengthening of the work of the OPCW, to which the new Center for Technology and Chemistry that opens in 2023 in Pijnacker-Nootdorp, only a few kilometers from where we gather today, will contribute.

Ten years after its accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention, *Syria* still has not given full disclosure of its chemical weapon programme. On the contrary and despite the claims of the Syrian government, Syria has ignored its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and UNSC resolutions by obstructing investigations by the Declaration Assessment Team, the Fact-Finding Mission and in particular the Investigation and Identification Team.

Nevertheless, in recent years it has been established, both by the Joint Investigative Mechanism and the Investigation and Identification Team, that the Syrian army is responsible for eight instances of

the use of chemical weapons and investigations are ongoing. In this regard, the Netherlands looks forward to further reports of the IIT. We call upon Syria to fully comply with its obligations without delay and unconditionally work with the TS.

As long as Syria chooses to ignore its obligations, the restrictive measures taken against Syria by the Member States of the OPCW must remain in place.

Furthermore, we call upon the *Russian Federation* to provide the fullest disclosure possible with regards to the assassination attempt, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms, on the Russian opposition politician *Mr. Alexei Navalny*. Mr. Navalny was poisoned on Russian soil by a military chemical nerve agent (“Novichok”) as was confirmed by several laboratories, as well as by the OPCW. This matter urgently needs to be clarified and those responsible must be held to account.

The draft *budget proposal* is a well-balanced document, under the given circumstances. We welcome the fact that the assessed contributions have not been increased. The Netherlands has no objections to the proposal to use the ‘Cash Surplus’ to cover costs in the current budget.

Finally, the Netherlands wants stress the importance of engaging *civil society* in our common goal to uphold the global norm against the use of chemical weapons. We support and encourage the widest possible participation of representatives of non-governmental organizations at the upcoming Conference of the States Parties as well as at the Review Conference in 2023.

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