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**STATEMENT BY H. E. AMBASSADOR THOMAS SCHIEB
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY
TO THE OPCW AT THE 101ST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished Ambassadors and delegates,

As we gather for the 101st Session of the Executive Council (“the Council”), Germany commends the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) for ensuring the effective implementation of the mandate of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We applaud their neutrality, professionalism, and resilience in the face of recurring unfounded accusations of partiality. Germany stands fully behind the Director-General and the Secretariat. The deliberate attacks by a few countries on the legitimacy and authority of the OPCW and its investigative mechanisms are undermining the Convention and its compliance regime.

Unfortunately, the most recent report by the Director-General (EC-101/DG.22) confirmed again that Syria continues to avoid providing clarifications both with regard to uses of chemical weapons which have been confirmed by the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and with regard to its initial declaration and subsequent questions raised by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). Since 2013, when Syria became a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”), continued activities under its chemical weapons programme have been confirmed. The Secretariat successfully implemented the decision taken by the Special Conference of the States Parties in June 2018 and “put in place arrangements to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic”. Two reports by the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) have since confirmed the responsibility of the Syrian Armed Forces for chemical weapons attacks against its own population, after the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism had already identified Syria as being responsible for four additional chemical weapons attacks. The OPCW is still waiting for Syria to clarify twenty open questions raised by the DAT, as well as the questions raised in Council decision EC-94/DEC.2. The Conference of the States Parties (“the Conference”) therefore reacted forcefully in April 2021 by suspending Syria’s rights and privileges pursuant to paragraph 2 of Article XII of the Convention. However, due to Syria’s continued non-cooperation, serious questions remain. The most challenging is the question of potentially continued Syrian efforts to maintain covert chemical weapons capabilities in spite of its obligations under the Convention.

It is with dismay that we have also witnessed several uses of chemical weapons on a small scale in recent years, notably against the Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny. The use of a chemical nerve agent against Mr Navalny on 20 August 2020 on Russian territory has



still not been addressed by the Russian authorities as prescribed by the Convention. One year ago, Germany, together with 45 States Parties, asked the Russian Federation in the framework of Article IX of the Convention for explanations regarding the poisoning of Mr Navalny. To date, the Russian Federation has not responded in substance to this request for clarification. 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 began an unjustifiable, unprovoked, and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine on 24 February this year, Russian officials have made repeated unsubstantiated claims that Ukraine is using or preparing to use chemical agents on its territory. We consider it unacceptable to levy such false accusations against Ukraine, a State that is in full compliance with its international obligations under the Convention, contrary to the Russian Federation. Germany categorically condemns this completely unfounded Russian disinformation campaign, which has even extended to other States Parties and the Secretariat. We express our deep concern that these accusations may precede the use of chemical weapons by those who are levying them.

Germany also deplores Russia's reckless military attacks in the immediate vicinity of civilian chemical facilities in Ukraine. We condemn any act compromising the safety of these facilities and reiterate the vital 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 the OPCW's monitoring of the situation, particularly around declared chemical industrial sites in Ukraine.

The current situation underlines the relevance of the Convention, now and for the future. While we celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention earlier this year, much still needs to be done to ensure its full and universal implementation. The most recent confirmed uses of chemical weapons on a small scale in particular underscore the need for the Organisation to maintain a robust verification regime. We therefore welcome the initial discussions in the context of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) in Preparation for the Fifth Review Conference under the able leadership of the Ambassador of Estonia. The first sessions on verification and international cooperation and assistance have shown the relevance of the Convention, as well as the need to ensure that the Convention and the OPCW remain fit for purpose, both in light of scientific and technological developments and in light of continuing challenges to the global ban on chemical weapons. Moreover, the OEWG's discussions have yet again confirmed that international cooperation and assistance is an integral part of the Organisation's efforts to achieve full compliance with the Convention by all States Parties. In addition, considerable developments in the chemical industry necessitate an overall reform of the industry verification regime. Germany is confident that further discussions on these matters within the OEWG will lead to a meaningful outcome for the Fifth Review Conference.

For more than ten years, the OPCW budget has remained practically unchanged, which has left the Organisation with 25 percent less purchasing power compared to 2009; as a result, the Conference adopted last year a biennial budget with a moderate increase. Germany continues to consider this budget proportionate. The marginal adjustment proposed now allows assessed contributions by States Parties to remain at the same level as in 2022. Given the current financial constrictions, it is essential that the Secretariat practices strict budgetary discipline.

Let me conclude by providing a brief update on the Executive Council Business Continuity Initiative, launched by Germany at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Unfortunately, up to today, consensus on the draft decision falls short of a few Council members, which is why we have still not tabled the decision. After consulting with our co-sponsors and endeavouring to produce a consensual decision by making further amendments to the text, we will continue consulting with States Parties. Our aim is to pave the way for a consensus on this decision by the next session of the Council, so that we can ensure the functioning of the Council even in circumstances where no in-person meetings are possible.

I would kindly ask you to consider this statement an official document and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you.

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