



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

101st Session  
4 – 6 October 2022

EC-101/NAT.40  
4 October 2022  
ENGLISH only

**ALBANIA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ADIA SAKIQI  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA  
TO THE OPCW AT THE 101ST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour of submitting this statement on behalf of the Republic of Albania.

The Republic of Albania would like to congratulate the Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Ziad M. D. Al Atiyah of Saudi Arabia, for effectively directing the preparations for this 101st Session of the Executive Council. I would want to assure him of our complete support as he guides the Council's operations over the next several months.

Your Excellency, Director-General, you have our full support and confidence that your professionalism and experience will help us to reach a successful conclusion of this 101st Session of the Executive Council. The Republic of Albania is grateful to this leadership for taking into account our needs and requests, as States Parties to the Convention.

In 2022, we are facing a new world reality. Moreover, the Republic of Albania holds a non-permanent member seat in the United Nations Security Council 2022-2024. In this capacity it is crucial for Albania to express the importance of maintaining the highest possible standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. This principle is painfully important especially in present times, as we are facing aggression and conflict against a sovereign country, increased uncertainty, and mistrust on the success rate of multilateralism.

The Republic of Albania addresses these issues in the Security Council, mindful of who we are and of the Albanian strategic political alliances as a member of NATO, as a European Union candidate country, that has just started its negotiation process for EU membership. As a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, we support receiving regular briefings on situations where serious human rights violations occur, and we will focus our efforts on defining the type of measures that the Security Council should take to respond to them. The OPCW and the United Nations Security Council work in complementarity with each other and cooperate frequently to achieve similar goals. In this aspect, Albania firmly believes that close cooperation between government stakeholders is the key to success and will continue to work for what we believe is worth fighting for in favour of peace, democracy, protection of human rights, and upholding international law.



The Republic of Albania firmly condemns the Russian aggression and openly demands that Russia withdraws all its forces and military presence from the territory of Ukraine. It is in the same vein, that Albania demands that Russia fully respects the sovereignty of Ukraine and stops its disinformation campaign. Coming from a country with a communist past which suppressed its population through propaganda, we in Albania know the hard way, the effects of disinformation. In this regard, we call upon Russia to cease with the ongoing disinformation campaigns and unsubstantiated allegations against Ukraine regarding the use of chemical weapons while risking exposure of the population to toxic chemicals through deliberate attacks against civilian industrial facilities. It is well established that Ukraine is a responsible State Party to the Convention and is in full compliance with the Convention. Any baseless defamation is regrettable and causes instability, which the Republic of Albania strongly condemns. The Republic of Albania would also like to extend its full support to the Secretariat staff of the OPCW against accusations and attacks on their integrity and professionalism in the exercise of their duties.

The Republic of Albania praises the efforts of the Director-General and the Secretariat to ensure that continuous progress is achieved on the Syrian Arab Republic dossier, and we wish to commend and confirm our support to the Director-General's steadfast efforts to engage in discourse with the Syrian Arab Republic authorities on the matter at hand. Continued refusal to issue visas for Secretariat experts and preventing their deployment on the ground can only delay and hamper their work on the ground. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to issue visas without delay for all staff members of the OPCW, including all the members of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), in accordance with the obligations of States Parties under paragraph 7 of Article VII of the Convention and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118.

As a State Party to the Convention, we have supported the decision by the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties on suspending the voting rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic due to Syria's failure to comply with the Convention. In order to reverse the decision, Syria needs to resolve the pending issues, declare the full extent of its chemical weapons programme, and return to full compliance with the Convention. Albania reiterates that any use of chemical weapons is simply unacceptable. Impunity for the use of chemical weapons cannot be tolerated. We strongly believe that it is important for the Convention to remain capable of responding to new and emerging threats.

The failure of the Syrian Arab Republic authorities to fulfil international obligations imposed by the Convention is substantiated through comprehensive and thorough investigations carried out by the Joint UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), as well as the OPCW DAT, Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). In this context, we want to take a moment to outline that we have previously expressed our concern with the continuous breach of its obligations by the Syrian regime, which was evidenced through comprehensive and thorough investigations conducted by the IIT. Albania wishes to extend its support to the IIT and looks forward to being informed on the IIT's next reports. We encourage the IIT to continue their crucial contribution to identify clear violations of the Convention and its core principles

I would like to emphasise what we already submitted at the 100th Session of the Council. Albania joined and is again joining many other Member States and is expressing concern that the Russian Federation has not reacted to international calls regarding the use of the toxic novichok as a weapon against Mr Alexei Navalny. The use of such a chemical nerve agent from the novichok group, which is banned under the Convention, was confirmed by two

OPCW-designated laboratories, as well as by three independent specialised laboratories in Germany, France, and Sweden. We call on the Russian Federation to cooperate with the OPCW and ensure that the perpetrators are identified and punished. We wish to reiterate the previous request to the Russian Federation to provide answers to the questions posed by 45 States Parties in the framework of paragraph 2 of Article IX of the Convention on 5 October 2021, and to disclose without further delay the circumstances of the assassination attempt against Alexei Navalny.

The Republic of Albania is also concerned about the Director-General's prediction that a high turnover in the Technical Secretariat's Inspectorate Division in 2023 would harm its operational capabilities. The scenario highlights the urgent need to alter the OPCW tenure policy at the Fifth Review Conference to improve the Technical Secretariat's capacity to keep vital expertise for Convention implementation. As a stopgap, rehiring inspectors should be guaranteed to ensure the continuation of quality work this Organisation is endowed to.

Albania positively supports the efforts of the OPCW to amend its current tenure policy with a view to improving the Technical Secretariat's ability to maintain key expertise required to ensure the continued implementation of the Convention. Albania commends the Director-General for promoting a gender-balanced, varied, and representative Technical Secretariat. We look forward to greater progress towards gender equality in the Organisation, especially via gender mainstreaming in all Technical Secretariat activity. We emphasise speedy implementation of the gender and diversity audit's recommendations and urge sharing findings with States Parties.

On behalf of the Republic of Albania I would like to underscore that the guidelines for participation of NGOs, at the Third Review Conference, were put in place to promote transparency and dialogue in this Organisation, including strengthening partnerships with organisations that share the concerns and aims of the States Parties. We have to make sure that these guidelines are not yet again undermined, but applied in the spirit of cooperation with NGOs whose activities and interests are relevant to the object and purpose of the Convention.

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

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