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LATVIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR AIGA LIEPIŅA
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA TO
THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Latvia aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

To begin, let me express gratitude to OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias for heading the Organisation and ensuring the implementation of the Convention during these challenging times. Latvia reiterates its full confidence in the Technical Secretariat's professionalism and impartiality.

The international community has been witnessing the Russian Federation's unjustified and unprovoked war against Ukraine, which is putting European and global peace and security at risk, damaging economies, disrupting global food supplies, causing instability in world energy markets. Russia's illegal military actions, war crimes committed against Ukrainian population and continuous destruction of civilian infrastructure constitute a gross violation of international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter. Latvia strongly condemns the Russian aggression and demands that Russia withdraws all forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has been accompanied by a targeted disinformation campaign falsely accusing Ukraine of using, or preparing to use, chemical agents in Ukraine. Over the course of the last months there have been many occasions when the Russian Federation used the framework of international institutions, including the OPCW and the United Nations to spread baseless allegations to discredit Ukraine's standing as a country that fully complies with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention"). Latvia deplores all of these Russian disinformation efforts.

Latvia remains concerned that the Russian Federation has not responded to calls by the international community, including the European Union for a thorough and transparent investigation into the assassination attempt on the Russian opposition politician Mr Alexei Navalny who was poisoned in Russia by a military chemical nerve agent of the novichok group



in August 2020. Impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not be tolerated. It is important that those responsible for the assassination attempt on Mr Navalny must be brought to justice. Latvia will support all efforts in this regard.

Mr Chairperson, the decision adopted by the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention suspending the voting rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic, because of Syria's failure to comply with the Convention, served as a powerful sign by the international community against impunity for the use of chemical weapons. Unfortunately, no progress has yet been demonstrated by Syria in any of the open issues. Therefore, Latvia urges Syria to engage constructively with the Technical Secretariat to resolve the pending issues, declare the full extent of its chemical weapons programme, and return to full compliance with the Convention.

Latvia supports the Director-General's proposed revision of the programme and budget for 2023 that makes it possible for the OPCW to carry on its vital work including cooperation and assistance projects.

Latvia is strongly convinced that the Convention is a key instrument of the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. Latvia agrees that upcoming the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Fifth Review Conference) will be an appropriate occasion to consider ways on how to strengthen international norms prohibiting chemical weapons. Latvia supports efforts by the Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia to steering the work of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference towards gathering multiple views with a goal of building consensus.

Mr Chairperson, Latvia holds the view that gender equality and mainstreaming of gender are and should continue to be an integral part of the work of the OPCW and implementation of the Convention. Latvia commends the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat for the work they have carried out thus far and look forward to further progress towards gender equality in the Organisation, including through the enhancement of gender mainstreaming in all areas of the Technical Secretariat's work.

We ask this statement to be made an official document of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties and published on the external server and the public website of the OPCW.

Thank you.