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FINLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ILKKA-PEKKA SIMILÄ PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF FINLAND TO THE OPCW AT THE
TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES
PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Finland aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union. In addition, I wish to highlight a few issues from a national perspective.

At the outset, I wish to warmly congratulate you, H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Madonsela of South Africa for your election as the Chairperson of the Conference of the States Parties and express both our full confidence in your leadership and our readiness to work with you for a successful outcome of the Conference. I would also like to thank H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway, the Chairperson of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and H.E. Ambassador Ziad Al Atiyah of Saudi Arabia, the Chairperson of the Executive Council, for their professionalism, commitment, dedication and effectiveness in fulfilling their duties.

Finland would also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Director-General Fernando Arias and the OPCW Technical Secretariat for their persistent work and determination in advancing the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”), especially amidst challenging circumstances. I reaffirm my country’s unwavering support to and confidence in the Technical Secretariat’s expertise, professionalism and impartiality.

We welcome the continued commitment and efforts of the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat towards a more gender equal, diverse and inclusive OPCW. Finland believes that integrating a gender equality perspective in the work of the Organisation and in the implementation of the Convention is of utmost importance and in need of strengthening. We encourage further steps to promote gender equality and mainstream gender throughout the Organisation and all aspects of its work, and look forward to continued dialogue on this topic.

Mr Chairperson, the past nine months have brought a complete change into global and European security paradigm and architecture. Finland strongly condemns Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine. It is a flagrant violation of international law. We firmly support Ukraine’s



independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Russia should withdraw all its armed forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine. We have firmly rejected and condemned—in the strongest possible terms—Russia’s attempted illegal annexation of the Ukrainian regions it has occupied. We will not recognise the illegal annexation of any Ukrainian region by Russia. Accountability for Russia’s brutal actions must be ensured.

We denounce Russia’s engagement in disinformation campaigns spreading unsubstantiated allegations against Ukraine and others regarding chemical weapons. Ukraine is a responsible member of, and in full compliance with the Convention.

Regrettably, the use of chemical weapons remains high on our agenda. The repeated violations of the Convention are deeply concerning. The use of chemical weapons—by anyone and under any circumstances—is a threat to international peace and security. It is completely unacceptable and a clear violation of international law, that may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. Finland condemns the use of chemical weapons in the strongest terms and calls on all States Parties to respect their obligations under the Convention. All those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable and brought to justice.

The failure of the Syrian Arab Republic to respect its obligations under the Convention has been well-established and substantiated by the results of comprehensive and professional investigations carried out by the OPCW-UN Joint Investigation Mechanism (JIM), the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) as well as the Investigation and Identification team (IIT). The most recent reports of the FFM in January established the use of toxic chemicals as weapons in Marea on 1 September 2015 and in Kafr Zeita on 1 October 2016. We look forward to the consideration of these instances by the Investigation and Identification Team.

We commend the Director-General’s tireless efforts to engage with Syria and thank the Technical Secretariat for their work on all aspects of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. Regrettably, there is no reported progress in any of the open issues, and instead Syria’s cooperation with the Technical Secretariat is deteriorating. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to return to full compliance with its obligations and to engage in good faith with the Technical Secretariat in accordance with the Convention and the United Nations Security Council resolution 2118. In support of the Secretariat’s work in Syria, Finland contributed EUR 100,000 to the OPCW trust fund for Syria missions this year.

Finland has unequivocally condemned the use of a military grade nerve agent of the novichok group to poison Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny on the territory of the Russian Federation in August 2020. We regret that despite continued calls the Russian Federation has not provided substantial answers to the questions posed by 45 States Parties in the framework of Article IX and that the circumstances of the assassination attempt have not been disclosed. We urge the Russian Federation to comply with its obligations under the Convention.

Achieving a world permanently free of chemical weapons requires predictable and solid financial resources. Finland supports the Director-General’s proposal for a revised programme and budget for 2023. We encourage all States Parties to enable the OPCW to continue its crucial work by paying their assessed contributions in full and on time.

In addition to financial resources, the OPCW needs adequate, qualified human resources and expertise. In this context, the high turnover of inspectors expected in 2023 is concerning. Finland supports the decision on rehiring of inspectors as an interim solution. However, it is

necessary to amend the OPCW tenure policy with the goal of providing required flexibility to help maintain key expertise for the benefit of the Organisation and the uninterrupted implementation of the Convention.

Mr. Chairperson, in May 2023 at the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Fifth Review Conference), we will have an excellent opportunity to consider how to strengthen the implementation of the Convention. We would like to thank the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG), H.E. Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia for his excellent leadership and commitment in guiding us in an inclusive and transparent manner towards the Fifth Review Conference. The comprehensive work of the OEWG and the structured preparatory process enable all States Parties to raise issues and priorities that are important in safeguarding and strengthening the global chemical weapons non-use norm. Finland will continue to participate in the preparatory process actively and constructively with the objective to counter the re-emergence of chemical weapons and to strengthen the Convention.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise the importance of engaging all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, non-governmental organisations and industry in the work of the OPCW, and their meaningful and broadest possible participation in the Conference of the States Parties, including the Fifth Review Conference.

I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the external server and public website.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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