



National Statement delivered by Ambassador Thomas Schieb
Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to the OPCW

At the 27th session of the Conference of the States Parties

Mr Chairman, Director-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first congratulate our Chairman, Ambassador Vusimuzi Madonsela, on his election as Chairperson of this Conference of States Parties. My delegation and I assure you of our full support.

The challenges to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW as its implementing body are considerable. Since 2014 we have witnessed an increase in the use of chemical weapons, compliance challenges to the CWC treaty have surged, thus undermining the Convention and seriously eroding international norms. These developments clearly stress the relevance of the Convention and the need for States Parties to remain engaged to ensure its full implementation.

This is the first Conference of State Parties since the Russian Federation started an unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine on 24 February thereby violating the security guarantees it had given to Ukraine under the Budapest Memorandum and blatantly threatening Ukraine, not least with dangerous nuclear rhetoric. Russian officials have made repeated unsubstantiated claims that Ukraine is using or is preparing to use chemical agents to defend itself against Russia. We consider it unacceptable to direct such false accusations at Ukraine, a state that is in full compliance with its international obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, unlike the Russian Federation. Germany categorically condemns this completely unfounded Russian disinformation campaign, which even stretched to other States Parties and the Secretariat. We express our deep concern that these accusations may precede the use of chemical weapons by those making the claims.

Germany also deplores Russia's reckless military attacks in the direct vicinity of civil chemical facilities in Ukraine. We condemn any act compromising the safety of these facilities and reiterate the utmost 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 industry sites in Ukraine.

Germany is deeply concerned by the apparent Syrian refusal to cooperate as reflected in the latest OPCW reports on its Syria missions. There are still twenty open questions of the Declaration Assessment Team linked to Syria's initial declaration. Damascus must provide the relevant information to the OPCW and resolve all pending issues with regard to the Syrian initial declaration. Following thorough investigations, the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) has identified the Syrian Armed Forces as responsible for four chemical weapon attacks in 2017 and 2018. We await further reports identifying the perpetrators of the chemical weapon attacks in Douma and Marea. In order to have the necessary financial means for the OPCW to work with Syria most efficiently, Germany is again making a voluntary contribution to the Trust Fund for Syria Missions.

The international community must make sure that those responsible for chemical weapon attacks cannot enjoy impunity. Those countries that shield and support the Assad regime bear a particular responsibility in this regard. Germany will continue to support global efforts to ensure accountability for perpetrators of chemical weapon attacks, whether in Syria or elsewhere.

We reiterate our call upon the Russian Federation to investigate in full transparency the assassination attempt on the Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny who was poisoned on Russian territory by a chemical nerve agent of the Novichok group in August 2020. Mr Navalny's poisoning has been confirmed beyond doubt by two independent OPCW laboratories, as well as by specialised laboratories in Germany, France and Sweden. For over a year now, we have been waiting for answers from the Russian Federation on factual questions posed on this matter under Article IX (2) of the Convention. Instead of providing substantive answers, Russia has levelled numerous accusations against various States Parties, including Germany, and the international community has been presented with far-fetched conspiracy theories.

Germany is very concerned that some States Parties are blocking the attendance of distinguished civil society organisations at this Conference, despite the NGOs in question having a proven track record of working on issues demonstrably relevant to the object and purpose of the Convention. The 2013 Review Conference agreed to open the Conference to civil society groups and adopted guidelines on their attendance. These guidelines and their implementation obviously need to be revised to facilitate NGO access in line with established best practices in the UN system.

Germany strongly believes that we must do justice to the important role of the Convention in contributing to global disarmament by providing the necessary resources to its implementing body, the OPCW. This is why we supported the proposed biennial programme and budget last year. The minor revision and new decision for 2023 is proportionate and adequate. However, with a view to current inflationary pressures, the Technical Secretariat is required to practice strict budgetary discipline so that the Organisation can continue to fulfil all its objectives.

2023 will be a particularly important year for the Convention. It will mark the end of the destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles. Against this background, next year's Review Conference of the Convention should give guidance and direction as to the future role

of the OPCW. All States Parties should engage in these discussions and must not lose sight of the core task of this organisation, which is to take all the necessary steps to ensure chemical weapons will never again be developed, produced, stockpiled and used. Unfortunately, even after the destruction of all declared stockpiles, the compliance challenges I referred to earlier show that we are still a long way from achieving this ultimate objective.

The new Centre for Chemistry and Technology (CCT) will be a cornerstone in the endeavour to give the OPCW the necessary instruments and resources to perform its tasks. The German Government has contributed to the construction budget for this new Centre, as have over 50 States Parties from all regional groups. We are similarly determined to support the future programmes that will be implemented at the CCT.

Let me end by underscoring that Germany remains strongly committed to the global fight against chemical weapons. As a dedicated State Party to the Convention, we will continue to support the OPCW in words and in deeds. In 2022, Germany assumed the presidency of the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. The G7-led Global Partnership brings together 30 member countries and the EU and since its creation in 2002 has made very important contributions to strengthening the CWC. During its presidency, Germany has continued this good tradition. Inter alia, one of the two regular sessions of the Global Partnership's Chemical Security Working Group was dedicated to ongoing and future cooperation with the OPCW. A special session of that group has addressed assistance to Ukraine, a member of the Global Partnership as well as a State Party to the CWC, to enable the country to protect itself from chemical threats stemming from Russia's war of aggression. Germany will continue to promote global chemical security also in the framework of the Global Partnership. Fighting the re-emergence of chemical weapons remains a pivotal security interest of all civilised nations.

Thank you.

We kindly request that this statement be considered as an official document of this Conference session and posted on both the external server and the public website.