

LITHUANIA

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR NEILAS TANKEVIČIUS PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA TO THE OPCW AT THE 102ND SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

[The Republic of Lithuania extends a warm welcome to the new Chairperson of the Executive Council, H.E. Ambassador Lucian Fătu of Romania.]

Lithuania aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Johannes Oljelund, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the OPCW on behalf of the European Union, and I would like to make the following remarks in the national capacity.

During this intersessional period we continue to witness Russia, and its shameful accomplice Belarus, waging a war of aggression against its peaceful and democratic neighbor Ukraine. It is a fact that the reckless attacks by the Russian Federation, including on residential areas and infrastructure, greatly increase the risk of accidents involving industrial chemicals. We also know that the Russian Federation has used chemical weapons in the United Kingdom in 2018 and on its own soil against Alexey Navalny in 2020. Therefore, we deeply value response from the Technical Secretariat and States Parties to Ukraine's requests for assistance and protection, as provided for under the Convention.

Another important development - the 3rd report of Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) was published with providing evidence that the Syrian Arab Air Forces carried out a chemical weapons attack in Douma in 2018. This attack claimed 43 lives of children, women and men. We express support and appreciation for the professional, impartial, and independent work carried out by the IIT and regret the lack of cooperation from Syria in this process and the desperate attempts of both Syria and Russia to block this investigation. Report also explicitly mentions the military and diplomatic support provided to the Syrian regime by Russia in the run up to the attack.

Any use of chemical weapons is an unacceptable breach of international law. Therefore we will work further on ensuring that there is no impunity for perpetrators and their supporters. Syria's voting rights and privileges in the OPCW must remain suspended until it complies with its CWC obligations.

Lithuania is actively involved in the preparations to The Fifth Review Conference. It is an opportunity to consider how to strengthen the Convention as a key instrument of the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Our particular focus is on chemical weapons dumped at sea. States Parties are not obliged to declare chemical weapons dumped at sea prior to 1985. But if they choose to do so, then those chemical weapons would be subject to the relevant provisions of the convention (declaration, verification, destruction). Therefore together with Bulgaria, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lebanon, Mexico, Poland, Romania and Ukraine we want to emphasize that it is important for the Technical Secretariat to continue monitoring international and regional developments, enhance its knowledge and stand ready to support consultation and cooperation among States Parties, to offer advise if requested.

We ask that this statement be made an official document of the Executive Council and published on the external server and the public website of the OPCW.