

AUSTRIA

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ASTRID HARZ

**PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE FIFTH REVIEW CONFERENCE**

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

Austria fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by the Special Envoy for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, Ambassador Marjolijn van Deelen. I would nevertheless like to make a few additional remarks in our national capacity. Austria congratulates Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast of the Netherlands for his election as Chairperson of the Review Conference and we look forward to working with you in order to achieve a strong outcome document of the Conference.

Austria is strongly committed to achieving a world free of all weapons of mass destruction. This Review Conference can make an important contribution to strengthening the Chemical Weapons Convention, reaffirming the absolute prohibition of chemical weapons and bringing us closer to universalization and full implementation.

During this review cycle, the Organisation had to face unprecedented challenges, from the repeated uses of chemical weapons via disinformation campaigns trying to discredit the Organisation to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Austria would like to thank the Director-General and the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their professionalism, competence, hard work and dedication to the OPCW during these years and express our full trust and confidence in the Technical Secretariat to continue this crucial work.

The many challenges the Organisation faces have also been extensively highlighted and discussed in a transparent and inclusive manner in the framework of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference. We would like to thank Ambassador Lauri Kuusing for his able leadership. The Draft Provisional Text by the working group created an excellent basis for the work of the Conference. The current draft strikes a careful balance and uses factual language concerning the review of the past five years. While Austria would have welcomed stronger references to crucial work of the OPCW, in particular concerning the Syrian Arab Republic, we do understand the need to find compromise, but this must be strictly rooted in facts and cannot ignore

the reality. We therefore call on all States Parties to engage in the last negotiations in good faith in order to find common ground.

Mr. Chairperson,

Given the time-limits I will not enter further into the many important issues before us, many of which have been or will be addressed in greater detail in the EU statement as well as in the cross-regional statements on the Syrian Arab Republic, on NGO participation as well as on Gender.

In closing, please let me repeat our unwavering commitment to advancing the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and our fullest support for the work of the OPCW and the Technical Secretariat. I would kindly ask you, Mr Chairperson, to consider this statement as an official document of the Fifth Review Conference and to post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

I thank you.