



Embassy of Finland
The Hague

Statement by Finland

Ambassador Ilkka-Pekka Similä
Permanent Representative of Finland to the OPCW
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Mr. Chairperson, Mr. Director-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

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

Finland would like to thank H.E. Ambassador Ziad Al Atiyah of Saudi Arabia, for his efforts and commitment as the Chair of the Executive Council during the past year. Finland wishes to welcome H.E. Ambassador Lucian Fatu of Romania in his new role as the Chair of the Executive Council.

I would also like to reiterate Finland's strong support to the OPCW Technical Secretariat. We thank the Director-General Ambassador Fernando Arias and his staff for their dedication and determined efforts. We have full confidence in the expertise, professionalism, impartiality, and independence of the Secretariat in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and other tasks assigned to it by the States Parties. Finland remains a staunch supporter of the Convention and the work of the OPCW.

Finland welcomes the completion of the destruction of the chemical weapons stockpile declared by the United States of America. This is an important milestone and

achievement for all of us, and a major step towards our shared goal of freeing the world of chemical weapons.

Mr. Chair,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chair of the Fifth Review Conference, Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast for his determination and efforts throughout the Conference. We regret that the Conference did not achieve consensus on an outcome document. However, the rich discussions and preparatory process provide us with opportunity to continue our work. We stand ready to build on the positive progress achieved on a number of issues such as tenure policy, diversity, gender equality and mainstreaming, NGO participation and industry verification in order to strengthen the implementation of the Convention and the OPCW.

Mr. Chair,

Finland condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons in all circumstances, by anyone, anywhere, and at any time. The use of chemical weapons undermines international peace and security, constitutes a violation of international law, and can amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Addressing the threat of chemical weapons use is essential for upholding international norms. Impunity for the use of chemical weapons cannot be tolerated. We continue to support collective efforts to ensure accountability for perpetrators of chemical attacks, including through the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

So far, the UN and the OPCW have independently and impartially attributed the use of chemical weapons to the Syrian regime on nine occasions. Finland condemns in the strongest possible terms the Syrian regime's repeated use of chemical weapons. Syria must immediately comply with its obligations under the CWC and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and fully cooperate with the OPCW, including with all mechanisms established by the Policy-Making Organs.

Finland wishes to commend the work of the Technical Secretariat on all aspects of the Syrian dossier. We welcome the latest FFM report of June 28, 2023 on reported incidents in Kharbit Massasneh on 7 July 2017 and 4 August 2017, and take note of the conclusions. Finland has provided and will continue to provide financial and political support to the important work of the OPCW Syria Missions, and looks forward to next reports of the FFM and IIT.

We reiterate our deep concern for the lack response by the Russian Federation to international calls for a thorough and transparent investigation into the assassination attempt of the Russian opposition politician Mr. Alexei Navalny. We once again ask the Russian Federation to provide substantial answers to the questions posed by 45 States Parties in October 2021 in the framework of Art. IX and, to disclose without further delay the circumstances of the assassination attempt against Mr. Navalny.

Mr. Chair,

In February 2022, Russia launched an unprovoked, unjustified brutal, full-scale invasion of its sovereign neighboring country, Ukraine. It is appalling to see a permanent member of the UN Security Council disregard its obligations for maintaining peace and security. Finland has strongly condemned Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine from the beginning. We firmly support Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Russia must cease military operations immediately and 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 recognize the illegal annexation of any Ukrainian region by Russia. Accountability for Russia's brutal actions must be ensured.

We are alarmed by recent reports regarding the use of riot control agents by Russia as a method of warfare. We call on Russia to strictly comply with its obligations under the Convention.

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 Chemical weapons Convention.

To conclude, I wish to stress our appreciation and strong support to the Director-General's efforts towards a more diverse Secretariat. We welcome and support further efforts towards gender equality in the Organization, including through enhanced gender mainstreaming in all areas of the Secretariat's work, including in capacity building and assistance activities.

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 Chair.