

**The 104th Session of the Executive Council of  
the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)  
General Debate  
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Hyoung-chan Choe  
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the OPCW**

**10 October 2023, The Hague**

Mr. Chair,  
Mr. Director-General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation to you, Mr. Chair, for your preparatory work for the 104th Session of the Executive Council in an effective and transparent manner. I have every confidence that this session will indeed yield outstanding outcomes under your able leadership.

My gratitude also goes to Director-General Fernando Arias and all the members of the Technical Secretariat (TS) for their endeavors to fully implement their mandates under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Mr. Chair,

At the last 103<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Council, we celebrated the completion of the full destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles. Despite this historic milestone, the global community still faces grave challenges in realizing a truly chemical weapons-free world. The fast-evolving landscape that encompasses industry, science and technology deepens concern over the potential re-emergence of chemical weapons. To address future challenges, it is critical to maintain the readiness of the OPCW and further upgrade its technical and professional capabilities.

In this vein, the Organisation should be equipped with adequate resources to successfully implement its key mandates under the Convention even after the complete elimination of all declared stockpiles of chemical weapons. The draft Programme and Budget for 2024-25 on the table well demonstrates such needs of the OPCW to continue its core activities, ranging from verification to international cooperation and assistance (ICA) and organizational governance. My delegation believes that the draft reflects a well-balanced and

efficient approach to put those key works back on track without imposing an undue financial burden on States Parties. My delegation is ready to support the budget proposal.

Mr. Chair,

Ten years ago, on 14 October 2013, the CWC entered into force for the Syrian Arab Republic. We appreciate tireless efforts of the OPCW to ensure Syria's compliance with its obligations under the Convention. Despite the achievements in the past decade, it is regrettable that our endeavors to clarify the initial declaration and investigate alleged incidents of use of chemical weapons in its territory are still being seriously hampered. We take note of the consultation between the TS and Syria this June in Beirut, but unfortunately, we have yet to witness any substantial progress.

We appreciate the utmost efforts of the Technical Secretariat (TS) to renew momentum for meaningful consultation with Syria to resolve all outstanding issues. My delegation also reaffirms its full support for the on-going work of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). We urge Syria to immediately cooperate with the TS to redress the situation and comply with the Convention, decisions of the policy-making organs, and relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The Republic of Korea emphasizes its unfaltering position that any use of chemical weapons cannot be tolerated and those responsible for such use must be held accountable.

Mr. Chair,

The war in Ukraine still remains one the greatest concerns for all of us. We are concerned with the possibility of misuse of toxic chemicals and the use of riot control agents (RCA) as a method of warfare. We request that the Secretariat continue to closely monitor the situation in Ukraine and ensure its preparedness to address any possible use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Chair,

Ensuring universal adherence to the Convention deserves more attention from all States Parties, particularly following the full destruction of declared stockpiles. This is essential to guarantee the full effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention. In this regard, my delegation strongly urges the four remaining States not Party to the Convention to join the convention as early as possible without preconditions. We also look forward that the TS will

strengthen its readiness for potential new membership in the future by preserving its relevant expertise.

Mr. Chair,

Regional cooperation in the field of the chemical safety and security is a valuable instrument to improve the comprehensive implementation of the Convention. Since 2012, the Republic of Korea has been organizing annual Seoul Workshops in collaboration with the TS to share best practices and knowledge and explore better ways to fully implement the CWC among chemical experts in the Asian region. We look forward that the 11th Seoul Workshop, scheduled from 17th to 19th of this October, will serve as a meaningful chance to strengthen regional capabilities.

Mr. Chair,

The importance of enhancing the professional capacity of TS personnel cannot be overemphasized. We welcome the establishment of the Working Group on Geographical Representation and the facilitation process on the tenure policy, as decided at the last 103rd Council Session. My delegation believes introducing a more flexible tenure policy and fostering broader geographical diversity can play a significant role in attracting highly qualified candidates, while retaining key expertise and skills required to ensure the continued implementation of the Convention.

We also support the consultations on engagement with civil society suggested by Germany. Given its expertise in the chemical related fields and its active role around the OPCW, the civil society is an invaluable partner to ensure full and effective implementation of the Convention by States Parties and the TS. We look forward that the consultation on this matter provides a good opportunity to devise concrete ways to strengthen the cooperation with civil society.

Mr. Chair,

In closing, I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this Executive Council Session and be published on the OPCW website and external server.

Thank you. /END/