

STATEMENT OF AUSTRIA

**AT THE EIGHTIETH SESSION OF THE OPCW EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR WERNER DRUML,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRIA TO THE OPCW**

6 OCTOBER 2015

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Director-General, distinguished colleagues,

Thank you for allowing me to take the floor under Rule 22 of the Rules of Procedure.

Mr. Chairman,

Austria fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. In addition, I would like to underline a couple of points of particular importance to my delegation.

We value the excellent work of the OPCW, particularly with regard to the situation in Syria, where from the outset the Technical Secretariat has shown a great amount of professionalism. The destruction of Syrian stockpiles and capabilities was (and unfortunately still is) a major challenge for this Organization and the international community as a whole. A lot has been achieved. But it is regrettable to realize that uncertainties regarding the Syrian chemical weapons declarations still exist. A continuation of the mission of the Declaration Assessment Team is therefore necessary.

The ongoing use of toxic chemicals being used as weapons in Syria is highly disturbing and needs utmost attention. The professional work of the Fact-Finding Mission has to be highly commended. The setting up a Joint Investigative Mechanism to identify perpetrators of chemicals attacks in Syria is of greatest importance.

As to Iraq, we count on the great experience of the Technical Secretariat to shed light on the allegations.

Mr. Chairman,

In spite of the still remaining work to do for the Organisation – such as to ensure the definite destruction of remaining stockpiles of chemical weapons, the continued challenge of the still not realized universality and the need to ensure full implementation before long - there seems to be a growing conviction, that it is high time to seriously address the future of the organization. The Director-General and the Technical Secretariat have prepared valuable reports in this regard that have been generally welcomed by us.

Technological developments and the changing security environment require an adaptation by the Organization in order to remain relevant also in the post destruction phase. At the recent Retreat there was large agreement in this regard, be it on the importance of maintaining its analytical capacity, its over the years acquired experience and memory, be it on the necessity to keep abreast with scientific and technological developments, be it on the central importance of its verification capacity, to face changing environment. We hope that at the next review conference we will be able to give political guidance to the Organization. The Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism could be one of the preparatory frameworks.

Mr. Chairman,

When speaking about the future of the organisation, about scientific and technological developments, we would find it difficult to understand not to initiate discussions on an issue which has consistently and rightfully so been referred to over the last years. We share the concerns raised by Australia and many others on central nervous system-acting chemicals. These chemicals pose a challenge to the CWC, this issue therefore warrants serious consideration by the Policy-Making Organs of the Organisation. The forthcoming CSP would be the appropriate moment to do so. We also welcome the leadership taken by Australia and Switzerland in this regard.

It goes without saying: the use of toxic chemicals for law enforcement purposes is in Austria restricted exclusively to riot control agents. The use of incapacitating chemical agents for law enforcement purposes has no place in the Austrian legal system.

Mr. Chairman,

There are many challenges ahead, but we are confident that the Organization will meet them and do so within the existing framework of the CWC. Austria will continue to actively support the Technical Secretariat in its work. We hope that a forthcoming cooperation between the Technical Secretariat and the CBRN School of the Austrian Armed Forces will prove to be a valuable contribution.

Finally, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session of the Executive Council and be posted on the Website of the OPCW.