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LITHUANIA

**STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES
PARTIES**

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

The Lithuanian position is fully reflected in the statement of the European Union. I would like to highlight a number of aspects of a particular importance in our national capacity.

Lithuania joins the call to defend and reinforce the regime prohibiting chemical weapons.

I would like to commend the professional and efficient work of the Director-General and Technical Secretariat in promoting and defending the Chemical Weapons Convention in highly demanding and challenging circumstances over the recent years.

The regime prohibiting chemical weapons has been seriously challenged. We have witnessed the use of chemical weapons by both State and non-State actors in an astounding violation of international law, despite an absolute ban on such activity under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Since early 2017 alone, we have seen chemical weapons use in four countries across the globe: in the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Malaysia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Thus far, with complete impunity.

As we condemn in the strongest possible terms all these attacks, it is simply not sufficient to determine whether they actually have occurred. We need identify those responsible in order to bring them to justice. Now is a time, like no other, to act collectively to defend the Chemical Weapons Convention and reinforce the prohibition on using chemical weapons to protect us all.

We deeply regret the non-renewal of the mandate of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) last November. Russia's disapproval of the renewal of this mandate in the United Nations Security Council deprived the international community of a critical instrument of investigation, attribution and deterrence against those responsible for the chemical attacks in the Syrian Arab Republic.



The Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW has a general purpose—to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons. For this, we need to reinforce and strengthen the Organisation.

The international community cannot afford to continue without an attribution mechanism to identify perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons. The convention allows for the OPCW itself to assign attribution. When responsibility is avoided, the potential acceptance of the use of chemical weapons as weapons of war and terror cannot be deterred.

Therefore, Lithuania supports the decision proposed by the United Kingdom and sponsored by a group of countries, including Lithuania. This decision will significantly contribute to upholding the global ban on chemical weapons. We also maintain that the Chemical Weapons Convention does not preclude a stronger role for the Organisation. With proven technical expertise regarding chemical weapons, the OPCW is well placed to investigate who is behind a chemical weapons attack, and begin attributing responsibility for chemical weapons attacks in the Syrian Arab Republic.

I would like to note that Lithuania has joined the International Partnership against the Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. Dealing exclusively with the issue of impunity for the perpetrators of chemical attacks worldwide, the purpose of the Partnership is to supplement the international mechanisms that combat the proliferation of chemical weapons.

We echo the call for those who have yet to join our Partnership to do so, as a common refusal to accept impunity for anyone, anywhere, responsible for the use of chemical weapons and an affirmation of our commitment to putting an end to their use. Wilful defiance of valued norms should not be allowed to go unchallenged.

As States Parties to the Convention, we have a responsibility and a duty to act in the face of this unprecedented erosion of global norms.

I would kindly ask you, Mr Chairperson, to distribute this statement as an official document of the Conference and to publish it on the official web-sites of the Organisation. Thank you.

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