



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Fourth Special Session
26 and 27 June 2018

C-SS-4/NAT.22
26 June 2018
ENGLISH only

ESTONIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PAUL TEESALU
UNDERSECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,

Firstly, let me assure you of Estonia's gratitude for your efforts at strengthening the international community's commitment against the use of chemical weapons by chairing this Conference.

We also express our strongest support and appreciation for the professional, impartial, and independent work of the Director-General and the OPCW Technical Secretariat, and commend them for their work towards implementing the object and purpose of the Convention.

In addition to the statement of the European Union, we would like to further highlight some important issues in our national capacity.

Estonia condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstance. We are deeply worried by the increase in reckless chemical attacks since 2012, in particular in the Syrian Arab Republic but also in Salisbury.

Acceptance of so many violations of the Convention could put the global ban on the use of chemical weapons under threat. As States Parties to the Convention we must act. There can be no impunity. The perpetrators of those heinous crimes must be held accountable. This is why we are here today.

I would therefore like to stress the important role of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism, established in December 2016 by UN General Assembly. Estonia is also part of the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons in order to further support international mechanisms to combat the proliferation and use of chemical weapons. However, to move ahead, we must tackle the issue of attribution. We believe the Chemical Weapons Convention allows the OPCW to go into attribution and that the Organisation has the solid technical capacity and operational experience to do so.



In today's situation, where we do not have the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism in place, it is even more important to follow up on the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) reports confirming chemical weapons use in the Syrian Arab Republic in Ltamenah in March 2017 and Saraqib in February 2018. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to engage with the OPCW and solve all outstanding concerns, including full verification of Syria's declaration.

However, restoring an independent mechanism for attribution is still essential, and we believe the OPCW should be empowered to identify those responsible for chemical weapons attacks in the Syrian Arab Republic. Therefore we fully support the Technical Secretariat putting in place the necessary arrangements.

We also support all measures that enhance the capabilities of the Technical Secretariat to strengthen the implementation of the Convention, including mandating the Director-General to develop proposals on establishing independent, impartial, expert arrangements to identify perpetrators; providing technical assistance upon request of a State Party, and further enhancing the OPCW's ability to address possible breaches of the Convention in order to be able to face current challenges.

Estonia supports developing all possible measures to uphold and strengthen the norm against the use of chemical weapons as a matter of urgency. We are therefore among the co-sponsors of the proposed draft decision, as presented in document C-SS-4/DEC/CPR, and call on all States Parties to support and adopt this decision.

I would kindly ask that this statement be issued as an official document and placed on the OPCW public website.

Thank you.

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