

**Statement on behalf of the Delegation of the Republic of Latvia
to the OPCW
at the Fourth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention
The Hague, November 2018**

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chair of the 4th Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and express my delegation's full support and cooperation throughout this session. We would also like to acknowledge the diligent work of the Technical Secretariat and wise leadership of the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, to ensure the effectiveness of our work in the upcoming days.

Latvia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union earlier and would like to make the following remarks in national capacity.

The international community is in the midst of a critical fight to maintain the international norm against chemical weapons use, which was established in The Hague Conference in 1899 and came into full force with the adoption of the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1997. While Chemical weapons were deliberately used at a large scale in our recent history - during the World War I -, after adoption of the Convention we were hopeful to deter these horrendous events from ever happening again. Unfortunately, lately we see the opposite - increased use of toxic chemicals, which leads to the stigma diminishing. Preservation of the integrity and vital role of the Chemical Weapons Convention is of the utmost importance; it is our main tool to advance chemical disarmament and non-proliferation.

In recent years the Convention has been challenged on number of occasions – in Syria, Iraq, Malaysia and most recently, in the United Kingdom. Latvia reiterates its condemnation, in the strongest possible terms, of the use of chemical weapons by state and non-state actors, under any circumstances. Therefore, I would like to stress that it is a responsibility of every Member State to further strengthen the century old norm and protect humanity from the indiscriminate nature of the chemical weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has been doing crucial work in this regard, and we have voted earlier this year to enhance the capabilities of the Organisation.

The OPCW and particularly the Technical Secretariat has shown the highest degree of professionalism and dedication to the task. Fact Finding Mission in Syria, technical assistance visits provided to the States Parties and OPCW – UN Joint Investigative Mechanism have strengthened disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Hence, we deeply regret the inability to renew JIM's mandate last November. Therefore, we have endorsed the decision in June on attribution and have supported the necessary actions and budget proposals by the Technical Secretariat to implement the decision.

We believe that impunity of the perpetrators has been at the core of continued use of chemical weapons. Hence, Latvia has joined the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons that already unites more than thirty States Parties from geographic regions. We also welcome adoption of the EU autonomous regime of restrictive measures specifically designed to fight the proliferation of chemical weapons and their precursors. United and coordinated multilateral action is the only way forward to tackle threats of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr Chairman,

The transformation of the OPCW laboratory into the Centre for Chemistry and Technology to advance future accountability and verification tasks is a well needed step forward for the Organisation. We also believe that Director-General's commitment to mainstream the gender perspective in the work of the OPCW will strengthen organization's overall capacity building.

As we reflect collectively on the many accomplishments that we as States Parties and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons have made over the years, it is important to acknowledge the attacks on Organization's integrity, independent work and physical infrastructure in the form of an attempted cyber-attack this spring. Latvia strongly condemns these malicious activities. It is another example of stark violations of the international norms and rules based international order. We are also deeply concerned about the potential use of toxic chemicals, which target the central

nervous system in law enforcement activities. This goes against the objectives of the Convention, and we support further discussions on this matter.

Mr. Chairman,

Concrete measures are critical to end repeated use of chemical weapons not only by state but also by non-state actors. The threat of non-State actor interest in development, acquisition, and use of chemical weapons is not a new challenge, but it is a growing one. Chemical terrorism is a real threat to international security and non-proliferation architecture, and can affect us all. This is another serious reminder that joint and coordinated international action in combating the use of chemical weapons, as well as the creation of a credible attribution mechanism, is crucial.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, it is the duty and responsibility of the international community to ensure that the use of chemical weapons does not become a norm and that the perpetrators of these heinous crimes are brought to justice.

Latvia remains strongly committed to the principles of the Chemical Weapons Convention and expects no less from other States Parties.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman