

Statement of the Republic of Lithuania
at the Fourth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention
November 21, 2018

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Director – General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

When the Convention banning chemical weapons came into effect in the spring of 1997, the international community was hoping to enter a new era where such weapons would become a thing of the past. Sadly, that is not the case. The threat posed by the renewed use of chemical weapons is serious and much too real. Since the Third review Conference alone, the world has witnessed chemical attacks in Syria, Iraq, Malaysia and recently the United Kingdom. To counter such disturbing trends, we need a strong and effective OPCW as much as ever. My delegation aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union. In a national capacity, allow me to highlight several points in particular.

Lithuania condemns in the strongest terms all use of chemical weapons by state or non- state actors anywhere in the world. Our responsibility as states parties to CWC is clear: we must do everything it takes to protect the Convention as a foundation of the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Only by resolute and determined action can we dissuade would-be perpetrators from undermining the CWC and causing more human suffering and death. And action we must take. In this context, Lithuania welcomes the adoption by the European Union on October 15 this year a restrictive measures regime to address the use and proliferation of chemical weapons and their precursors.

Lithuania welcomes the Decision of the Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC, taken on 27 June 2018, on attribution mechanism, which will enable OPCW experts to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons and to provide assistance to affected states parties in identifying the perpetrators, organisers, sponsors and all those involved whenever chemical weapons are used.

We also welcome the adoption of the 2019 OPCW budget earlier this week, in spite of the efforts by a handful of states parties to undermine the attribution mechanism. The tradition of consensus decision making by this Organisation is an admirable one, worthy to be aspired for. However, no one should have the power of a veto to block the international community's resolve to act that the Convention has not granted to any party. Especially in the face of the continued paralysis of the UN Security Council on the issue of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, including the dismantling of JIM, arising from the multiple vetoes cast by one of those very countries that sought to undermine OPCW's role on attribution.

My delegation would like to underline that OPCW experts, investigating alleged chemical weapons attacks and verifying other aspects of the implementation of the CWC, must enjoy unhindered access to the sites of attacks and all related objects. Any attempts to discredit or undermine the work and authority of the OPCW and its

experts are unacceptable. We look forward to the OPCW improving its technical capacity and capability to carry out its important role. Lithuania supports the updating of the CWC schedules by including the Novichok chemical nerve agent, as proposed by the United States, The Netherlands, and Canada.

Mr. Chairman,

It is our common task to make sure that the Chemical Weapons Convention cannot be compromised without consequences. Ending impunity is a critical element of deterrence, and of safeguarding the Convention. By extension, it is a critical element of increasing our own safety and security as fellow human beings. In this context we commend the initiative by France to set up the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, which Lithuania joined in May this year. We are pleased that the ranks of this partnership continue to expand, including countries from all geographical groups. We expect the partnership to continue acting as a mobilising force for upholding the Convention and a powerful voice for accountability on behalf of the victims of chemical attacks.

Mr. Chairman,

Just recently, we have witnessed the solemn commemoration of the centenary of the end of World War I, sometimes referred to as “the chemical war”, due to the horror of the use of chemical weapons on a mass scale that it had unleashed. Memory obliges. We cannot allow the evil of CW to reemerge. It is our duty to reaffirm our joint resolve to preserve and uphold the importance of CWC - both, as a legal norm and a moral paradigm. And while we continue our efforts to stamp out the use of chemical weapons for good, my delegation believes we should also make sure we clean up the dangerous trail of the remnants of previous wars. Lithuania has taken the initiative, here at the OPCW and at the United Nations, to raise the issue of the sea-dumped chemical munitions, buried across the waters of the world. In preparation for the 4th Review Conference earlier this month, a joint Lithuanian- Polish paper was submitted on the issue, calling to promote the OPCW as a forum for voluntary cooperation on the issue, including through information sharing, raising awareness and joint project implementation. We thank all the states parties that support our efforts in this respect.