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UKRAINE

**STATEMENT BY MR VASYL BODNAR DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF UKRAINE AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE
STATES PARTIES TO REVIEW THE OPERATION OF THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS
CONVENTION**

Fellow ministers,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Mr Chairperson, allow me to join previous speakers in extending our congratulations upon your assumption of the Chair of the Forth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to review the operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. I would like to assure you that the delegation of Ukraine will support all your efforts to ensure the successful and meaningful outcome of our work during the two following weeks.

I would also like to thank Ambassador I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja of Indonesia for his contribution in chairing the Open-Ended Working Group, the OPCW Director-General Ambassador Fernando Arias and the Technical Secretariat staff for their continuous efforts in ensuring progress in the implementation of the Convention and raising awareness about its important role in global multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation.

Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by Mr Jacek Bylica, Special Envoy for disarmament and non-proliferation. I take this opportunity to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is widely recognised as the first multilateral instrument, banning the entire class of weapons of mass destruction under strict and efficient international control and compliance mechanism.

This international legal instrument with its 193 Member States is a unique political phenomenon and a showcase of synergy of political will and common sense.

At the same time, the global multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation architecture is under serious pressure. Now we are witnessing this on many fronts, and unfortunately, this is also true for the Chemical Weapons Convention. The continuous use of chemical weapons is an alarming tendency, and we must unite all our efforts to counter this phenomenon.



Ukraine stands firm in condemning, in the strongest possible terms, the use of chemical weapons by anyone, be it State or non-State actors, anywhere and under any circumstances and expresses its conviction that perpetrators must be held accountable.

The repeated use of chemical weapons in Syria, Iraq, Malaysia, and most recently in the United Kingdom is a direct challenge to the international non-proliferation regime.

There is an urgent need to act collectively to reinforce the prohibition against the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons. Those, who choose to ignore these prohibitions, and use chemical weapons, should be identified and held to account.

The OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) has played an invaluable role, by pursuing objective, impartial and independent investigations aimed at identifying-to the greatest extent feasible-individuals, entities, groups, or governments who were perpetrators, organisers, sponsors or otherwise involved in the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Ukraine-being the non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council in 2016-2017-with other members, made serious efforts to bridge the division between the positions of the permanent members and to find a way to retain the JIM. We regret that two draft resolutions were vetoed by the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation blocked the world's ability to attribute the chemical weapons attacks in Syria by vetoing the renewal of the JIM.

The United Nations Security Council's continuous inability to respond to the use of chemical weapons inadvertently aggravates the situation on the ground and may trigger further dangerous consequences in and beyond Syria.

We must remain vigilant against those who do not hesitate to use weapons of mass destruction; against those who defend the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons; and against those who distort clear facts and manipulate them with an attempt to discredit independent international entities and obstruct their work.

All of that has become a hallmark of the Russian Federation's position on this issue. Ukraine reiterates its condemnation, in the strongest possible terms, of the March 2018 attack in Salisbury. We agree with the assessment of the Government of the United Kingdom that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible for this attack and that there is no other plausible alternative explanation. We commend the United Kingdom for its transparency and the progress in the investigation, which we hope will soon lead to the prosecution of the perpetrators of this abhorrent act.

Any such act cannot be left unanswered since it undermines not only the basic sense of justice but also leads to the erosion of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime and, as a consequence, it undermines the security of all of us. We have also been appalled by the cynicism of the Russian authorities and state-controlled media in their reaction to the results of the investigation of the chemical attack in Salisbury. Moreover, as it was recently revealed, the Russian authorities have launched a witch-hunt against those who helped to identify probable perpetrators.

In this context, we are not surprised by the recent information about a targeted hostile cyber operation against the office of the OPCW committed by the Russian military intelligence service in April this year. This is another example how the Russian Federation attempts to undermine international law and institutions. Russia must stop its reckless pattern of behaviour, including the use of force against its neighbours.

In June, the Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties, with an overwhelming majority, adopted a decision that confirms the authority of the OPCW not only to investigate whether chemical weapons were used, but also to determine who was responsible for the use. It is not only a big step towards accountability and justice, but it should also deter both State and non-State actors from further use of chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere. We should not accept such horrendous acts to become normal.

I hope that we will be able to create an effective attribution mechanism aimed at fighting against impunity for the use of chemical weapons. We strongly believe that the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW with its expertise and independent and impartial nature is well prepared to perform such a technical task of attribution.

It is critical to find practical ways to ensure that the international legal norms related to WMD non-proliferation do not remain on paper, but that they are also properly enforced and fully respected. That is why it is important to take effective actions in response to those involved, not only in the use of chemical weapons, but also in shielding perpetrators of such crimes from responsibility.

Universality of the Convention has long-term implications for its credibility and is indispensable to ensure irreversible character of chemical disarmament and its global dimension. The Ukraine highly appreciates the efforts undertaken by the OPCW in this sphere.

We commend the five States that have acceded to the Convention since the last Review Conference.

Since some States have not yet made their choice in favour of Convention, we also believe that it is a common task to use all possible political instruments to convince them to join the Convention in order to achieve its ultimate goal; to make the world free of chemical weapons. My Government appeals to those four remaining States which have not signed or ratified the Convention to accede without delay.

The importance of the universality of the Convention becomes even more crucial now in today's complex international environment, with a growing threat of a "chemical terrorism". In this context we salute and mark the significance of the landmark decision on the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors adopted at the Eighty-Sixth Session of the Executive Council in November 2017. The establishment by the Technical Secretariat of the Rapid Response and Assistant Mission is more big progress made at the OPCW to address the threat of chemical terrorism.

We are satisfied that four countries completed the destruction of their declared chemical weapons arsenal and today the only one country remains to completely rid of its chemical weapons. We have no doubts that the destruction will be completed on time.

Since the OPCW will refocus its efforts from demilitarisation to preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons, the Organisation must better position itself to fulfil its verification functions to address the threat from non-State actors, and to support the implementation of Article VII, X, and XI through international cooperation and assistance, including capacity building.

In this context we have to admit the threat of the new type of warfare agent used in Salisbury and identified by the Scientific Advisory Board in its recent report. Therefore, Ukraine supports a technical proposal submitted jointly by the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands to the Director-General to update the Annex on chemicals by adding the two families of chemical agents to the list of Schedule 1 chemicals.

Ukraine sees this conference as an important opportunity to reflect on the contribution the Convention has made to disarmament, non-proliferation, and security around the globe over the past five years. More importantly, it is also the time to deliver guidance on how this Organisation should contribute to the world's security and stability over the next five years.

Ukraine recognises that in the next five-year period we will see further rebalancing of efforts and resources from destruction to preventing proliferation, the re-emergence of chemical weapons, and the acquisition of toxic chemicals by non-State actors. We believe that it would be of value to the OPCW for States Parties to set targets for its activities and results over the coming five years, as a benchmark against which its effectiveness can be measured.

The convergence of chemistry and biology also poses challenges to the Convention. The dissemination of advances in science and technology could place the acquisition of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals more easily within reach of non-State actors. Therefore we fully support strengthening the OPCW's role to identify, monitor and report on relevant developments in science and technology.

In this context we strongly support a very important and relevant decision to upgrade the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store to a Centre for Chemistry and Technology. We wish also to commend Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat for their efforts on this project implementation.

Mr Chairperson, by concluding this statement let me stress once again that the international community should act decisively and in a united manner with a view to preventing any attempts and countering each and every action taken to endanger the relevant international instruments through either open aggressive policies or through blocking the important decisions or spreading false and fabricated news stories.

I request that this statement be considered an official document of the Conference.

Thank you.

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