



OPCW

Executive Council

Ninety-Second Session
8 – 11 October 2019

EC-92/NAT.7
8 October 2019
ENGLISH only

FINLAND

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PÄIVI KAUKORANTA
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FINLAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-SECOND SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, the potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries Iceland and Norway, members of the EEA (European Economic Area), as well as Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine align themselves with this statement. Andorra, Monaco, and San Marino also associate themselves with this statement.

The European Union would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairperson, Ambassador Andrea Perugini, for his leadership in effectively preparing this session of the Executive Council (“the Council”). Sir, we assure you of our full support in steering the preparations for a successful Conference of the States Parties (“the Conference”) in November.

We also thank the OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his comprehensive report to the Council. The report testifies to the intensity and quality of work undertaken by the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”). I would like to put on record our full confidence in the professionalism and capacity of the Secretariat to implement the decisions taken and tasks assigned by the States Parties.

The Convention is a key instrument of the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. The implementing body of the Convention, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), must be funded appropriately to achieve the Convention’s aim: a world free of Chemical Weapons.

The Director-General's proposed Programme and Budget for 2020 is proportionate and justified. It maintains the 2019 level of assessed contributions for all States Parties. The



budget will enable the OPCW to continue its vital work throughout 2020, including cooperation and assistance projects.

The European Union urges all members of the Council to support the submission of the Director-General's draft budget to the Conference. A timely decision is needed as the current budget expires in December 2019.

The EU Member States together account for some 40% of the OPCW regular budget. In addition, the European Union has considerably increased its voluntary financial contribution in support of OPCW activities. On 1 April this year, the European Union Council of Ministers decided to contribute EUR 11.6 million over the next three years. This voluntary contribution will be used for a variety of important activities of the organisation, such as financing the establishment of the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology as well as the development of national capacities of States Parties, including through the Africa Programme. With this new decision, the total voluntary contribution from the European Union amounts to EUR 57 million since 2004.

Once again, we take the opportunity to call on States Parties that are in arrears of payment of their annual contribution to pay their share immediately. By not respecting their financial engagement, they are hampering the effective functioning of the Organisation and reducing the resources available to support States Parties in need of assistance.

We wish to express our thanks and appreciation to Mr Daniel Baptista and Mr Marcin Kawałowski for their hard work and dedication as budget 2020 facilitators.

The Twenty-Fourth Conference in November this year will address the issue of updating the Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention ("Annex on Chemicals"). It is essential that the Convention remains responsive to new and emerging threats. The Joint Proposal submitted by the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands to add two new families of the chemicals, including the substance used in Salisbury, to Schedule 1 will help to achieve this. The European Union supports the draft decision which has been circulated and looks forward to its adoption by consensus at the Twenty-Fourth Conference. We have also taken note of the modified proposal by the Russian Federation to introduce changes to Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals. This modification is a positive step that we hope will pave the way for reaching an agreement at the Conference.

The European Union reiterates that any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances is unacceptable. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons should be held accountable. We commend the OPCW Secretariat for the establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), as mandated by the Decision "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use" (C-SS-4/DEC.3, dated 27 June 2018). We look forward to the issuing of the IIT's first report, which will represent important progress towards identifying those responsible for chemical weapons use in Syrian Arab Republic.

The European Union has taken note of the OPCW Director-General's reports regarding state-of-play in the elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme. We express great concern at the Syrian regime's continued breach of its obligations as a State Party to the Convention due to its failure to provide a complete Declaration and its failure to destroy all of its chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities. This is evidenced by the

reports of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), and the report by the Director General (EC-82/DG.18, dated 6 July 2016) requiring a change in the approach by the Syrian Arab Republic. We commend the continuous commitment of the OPCW Director-General on the framework of the Structured Dialogue to assist Syrian Arab Republic in the full implementation of its obligations.

We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the OPCW Secretariat as required under the Convention and reiterate our strong support for the important work of the Fact Finding Mission (FFM), the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), and the IIT.

The European Union currently imposes restrictive measures on a total of 32 persons and two entities in the Syrian Arab Republic specifically for their role in the development, production, and use of chemical weapons, in violation of the Convention. These restrictive measures have been imposed in the framework of the EU's sanctions against the Syrian Arab Republic, and under the EU's autonomous chemical weapons sanctions regime. The European Union is also actively participating in the work of the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

The European Union reiterates its strong commitment to work together for a world free of chemical weapons and therefore is supportive to any initiative favoring dialogue among States Parties. We would like to thank the Co-facilitators Ambassadors Puja of Indonesia and Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador for their hard work, constructive approach, and inclusive consultations. We also commend the Council Chairperson's proposal on revitalising the facilitation framework for its balanced approach building on the consensus elements emerging from the extensive consultations undertaken by the Co-facilitators. We agree on the main assumptions that the future framework or mechanism of the facilitation has to be substance driven and interactive. We also agree on its cross-cutting nature as many of the topics are inter-related while avoiding duplication and micro-management. We look forward to continue contributing to this inter-active process with a view to arriving at a consensual outcome.

The EU considers it important for the Secretariat to maintain verification expertise relating to chemical weapons in the Inspectorate Division. The rehiring mechanism, as an interim measure, contributes to this purpose and supports the efforts to build up a viable knowledge management system while the overall framework and policy for workforce management is under consideration. We also encourage the Director-General to continue to recruit staff with the necessary skills and gender balance among Secretariat staff and OPCW activities.

The European Union attaches great importance to the interest and engagement of all relevant stakeholders such as chemical industry, think tanks, academia, civil society organisations, and NGOs for cooperation, synergies, and awareness-raising purposes. This is all the more important now that the OPCW's work shifts from stockpile destruction to preventing re-emergence of chemical weapons. The refusal to accredit some of the stakeholders' participation in the Conference by a small number of States Parties is not only regrettable but against the spirit of Third Review Conference decision to open the annual Conference to civil society groups.

I would kindly ask you, Mr Chairperson, to consider this statement as an official document of the Ninety-Second Session of the Council and post it on the OPCW External Server and public website. The Finnish EU Presidency has issued this statement on the website of its Embassy in The Hague.

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