



**STATEMENT OF REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
BY AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA, H.E. MS. ADIA SAKIQI
24TH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF SP TO THE CWC
HAGUE, 25 – 28 NOVEMBER 2019**

Mr. Chairperson, Mr. Director-General, Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the Republic of Albania.

Early this morning, strong earthquakes hit Albania claiming 14 lives and counting, more than 300 injured and causing a lot of material damage. I would like to thank all of you for the solidarity and help in this difficult time. Disasters like this, remind us how fragile we all are and how important it is to do our utmost, when we can, to save lives, just like this honourable organisation is committed to eradicate victims of chemical weapons. Earthquakes we cannot prevent, but use of chemical weapons we can.

I will now continue with my statement on my national capacity. Republic of Albania fully aligns with the EU statement.

Heartfelt congratulations to Ambassador Kostov of Bulgaria for his election as the Chairperson of the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference of States Parties. Your Excellency, you have our full support and we are convinced that your dedication and experienced leadership will navigate us to reach a successful conclusion of the 24th Session.

The Republic of Albania expresses its gratitude to the outgoing Ambassador Yun Young Lee of the Republic of Korea for his admirable work as the Chair of the 23rd Session of the Conference of States Parties (CSP).

At the same time, allow me to thank the Chairperson of the Executive Council, Ambassador Andrea Perugini of Italy, for his excellent performance in guiding the preparatory work for this session. I would also like to express my gratitude to H.E., Ambassador Jana Reinišová, of Czech Republic, for her excellent work as Chair of the Executive Council.

Moreover, on behalf of the Republic of Albania, I would like to express our gratitude to the Director General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his professional leadership. We appreciate your substantial statement Mr. Director General. Albania would like to commend the dedicated work and contribution of the OPCW's Technical Secretariat (TS) to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and tasks assigned by the States Parties. The Technical

Secretariat has played a crucial role in devising the CWC as one of the most successful disarmament regimes in the world.

We also acknowledge and support the Director-General's recent visit to the United Nations Security Council to share information on the OPCW activities.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Chemical Weapons Convention is an unparalleled platform to promote and apply the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. Its implementing body, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, must be appropriately funded to achieve the stated aim of the Convention: a world free of Chemical Weapons.

The Director General's proposed programme and budget for 2020 is proportionate and justified. It upholds 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 Republic of Albania supports the adoption of the Director General's draft budget.

Mr. Chairperson,

Allow me to again support and reiterate what my distinguished colleagues have already shared thus far during the workings of this Conference. Albania echoes that any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances is unacceptable. We as State Parties must stay united in ensuring achievement of our common ultimate goal, which is to eradicate all existence of dangerous chemical weapons.

Those responsible for the use of CW should be held accountable. We commend the OPCW TS for the establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), as mandated by the Decision "Addressing the Threat from CW use" (C-SS-4/DEC.3). Albania unequivocally supports the EU and UK stance regarding the request for accountability and acknowledgment for those responsible to the use of chemical weapons in Syria, as we believe it would help in ending the culture of impunity. For that matter, we are positive that the IIT's first report will be an important step towards that goal.

As regards the elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme, Republic of Albania, on the basis of the reports of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), and the report by the Director General (EC-82/DG.18 2016), requiring a change in the approach by the Syrian Arab Republic, calls on the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat as required under the Convention and we reiterate our support for the important work of the Fact Finding Mission (FFM), the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the IIT.

Mr. Chairperson,

During this session, we will review the updating of the Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to the CWC. We believe it is essential that the CWC 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 Novichok to Schedule 1 will help achieve this.

The Republic of Albania endorses this draft decision. We also support the amended proposal by the Russian Federation to introduce changes to Schedule 1. This modification is a positive step. Albania welcomes the adoption of the two proposals by consensus.

Mr. Chairperson,

Providing for and securing universal adherence to the CWC should go on and remain top priority.

We are constantly faced with the critical juncture, as on one hand, universality of the Convention and the destruction of declared chemical weapons are not yet complete. On the other hand, we need to step up efforts to stop the re-emergence of chemical weapons. Preventing impunity and strengthening the non-use norm is the crux of the matter. The organisation should continue to further and uphold the collective goal of preventing chemistry from ever again being used for conflict or warfare, thus strengthening international security.

Albania believes that capacity building is essential to assist States Parties in fulfilling their obligations under the CWC and to cope with the fast-moving developments in science and technology. A specific example is the transformation of the OPCW laboratory into a Centre for Chemistry and Technology (CCT), which we believe will be a qualitative leap in the Organisation's capacity to perform its core tasks in verification, inspection and capacity building. Albania supports this project.

Mr. Chairperson,

Allow me to draw attention to the apt coincidence that yesterday marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, as designated by the United Nations General Assembly. Therefore, The UN Secretary-General's agenda for Disarmament explicitly recognizes that gender perspectives contribute to increase the effective arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. We need to collectively incorporate gender perspectives in all efforts within arms control and disarmament. In this context, Albania commends progress made by the TS and encourages the Director-General to continue further improving fair gender and geographical distribution within the TS staff, through a merit-based and transparent recruitment process.

Mr. Chairperson,

We would like to thank the Co-facilitators Ambassadors Puja of Indonesia and Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador for their solid and persistent work and we welcome the solution to revitalising the facilitation framework.

Mr. Chairperson,

Republic of Albania attaches great importance to the engagement of all relevant stakeholders such as chemical industry, think tanks, academia, civil society organisations and NGOs for their good cooperation, synergies and awareness-raising purposes. We should heavily rely on the efforts of these stakeholders, especially now that the OPCW's work shifts from stockpile destruction to preventing re-emergence of chemical weapons. Consequently, we support the joint statement concerning accreditation of NGOs for this session of the Conference as presented by Ireland, in that we feel it is of great importance and in accordance with the spirit of 2013 Review Conference decision, to open the annual Conference of States Parties to academia and civil society experts.

I would kindly ask you, Mr Chairperson, to consider this statement as an official document and post it on the OPCW External Server and public website.

Thank you.