



Statement

by Ambassador Andrej Benedejčič,

**Special Envoy of the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Slovenia for Arms
Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation**

at the 24th Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention

The Hague, 25 – 29 November 2019

Mr. Chairperson, Director General, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you Ambassador Krassimir Kostov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on your election as the Chairperson of the Conference. Excellency, you can count on active engagement and support of the Slovenian delegation in the forthcoming days.

Mr. Chairperson,

Chemical weapons were used on Slovenian soil during World War I, in particular in 1917 during the Twelfth Battle of Isonzo. This is how we learned first-hand and early about their abhorrent and devastating effects. In addition to what has been said on behalf of the European Union, I would like to make several remarks in my national capacity as well.

It is utterly unacceptable that the use of chemical weapons has returned in its full force in recent years. I cannot emphasize enough that we have to do as much as we can to prevent the re-emergence of this scourge. Slovenia believes that only a multilateral approach, with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the

OPCW at its centre, can pave the way to a world without chemical weapons. This is why Slovenia supports and commends the professional, independent and impartial work of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW under the leadership of its Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias.

Strengthening the capacity of the Organization, which was established to help states parties implement the Convention in preventing the use, the proliferation and the impunity for the use of chemical weapons, must be the primary answer to the global re-emergence of chemical weapons use. In order to achieve this goal, the Organisation needs to be appropriately funded. In this connection, Slovenia supports the adoption of the proposed Programme and Budget for 2020 and encourages all States Parties to do likewise.

For the effective implementation of the Convention, it is also crucial to reinforce the capabilities of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and support capacity building of the States Parties. Upgrading the OPCW laboratory into a Centre for Chemistry and Technology is important for facing rapid technological development and ensuring the highest quality of performance in OPCW's principle tasks such as inspection, verification and assisting States Parties in capacity building and research. Slovenia expressed its support by making a voluntary financial contribution to a special OPCW Trust Fund.

Mr. Chairperson,

The long-standing prohibition of chemical weapons has been challenged in recent years by their repeated use in the Syrian Arab Republic, and elsewhere. Slovenia condemns in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons by anyone. Such acts constitute a serious violation of international law and those responsible for the use of chemical weapons should be held accountable.

We are confident that the professional and impartial work of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) will greatly contribute to the identification of the

perpetrators of chemical weapons use in Syria. We look forward to its first report. Slovenia stands fully behind the IIT's mandate and we made a voluntary financial contribution to the IIT.

Slovenia is also actively participating in the work of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

Mr. Chairperson, it is important to my country that the Convention remains up to date with regard to new and emerging threats. For this reason we support the update of the Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention and we look forward to the adoption of the two proposals by consensus.

Slovenia has since its very beginning strongly supported the initiative regarding the use of central nervous system (CNS) – acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes. We are looking forward to further discussion and adoption of a decision by the Conference of States Parties next year, re-affirming that the aerosolised use of these chemicals is inconsistent with law enforcement purposes as a “purpose not prohibited” under the Convention.

Furthermore, I would like to stress that Slovenia appreciates engagement from the civil society in our common goal to uphold the global norm against the use of chemical weapons. Transparency and openness are fundamental values of the OPCW and the participation of NGO representatives at the Conference of the States Parties should be welcomed.

Finally Mr. Chairperson, I would like to commend the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his exemplary efforts to achieve greater gender equality and geographical representation within the Organisation.

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, Mr. Chairperson