

STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MIKA-MARKUS LEINONEN
EU LIAISON OFFICER TO THE HAGUE
AT THE 24th SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO
THE CWC

(The Hague, 25 – 29 November 2019)

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 thank the Ambassador Yun Young Lee of the Republic of Korea for his tireless efforts as the Chair of the 23rd Session of the Conference of States Parties (CSP) and wish him all the best in his new responsibilities. We also thank the Chairperson of the Executive Council, Ambassador Andrea Perugini of Italy, for his outstanding performance in guiding the preparatory work for this session.

The European Union congratulates Ambassador Krassimir Kostov of Bulgaria for his election as the Chairperson of the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference of States Parties. Sir, you have our full support and we are confident that your professionalism and experience will help us to reach a successful conclusion of the 24th Session.

We also take this opportunity to thank the Director General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his comprehensive statement and commend the professionalism and capacity of the OPCW Technical Secretariat (TS) to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and tasks assigned by the States Parties. The Technical Secretariat has played a central role in making the CWC one of the most successful disarmament regimes in the world. In this context, the

European Union underlines the complementarity of the work between the OPCW and the United Nations and appreciates 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 a key instrument of 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 (CW).

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. Therefore, the European Union urges all States Parties to support the adoption of the Director General's draft budget.

The EU Member States together stand for some 40% of the OPCW regular budget. In addition, the European Union as well as its member states have 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 3 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 (CCT) 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.

Mr. Chairperson,

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 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). 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 (SAR).

As regards the elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme, the European Union expresses 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 CW and CW 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 2016), requiring a change in the approach by the Syrian Arab Republic. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the OPCW Technical 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 2 entities in the Syrian Arab Republic specifically for their role in the development, production and use of chemical weapons, in violation of the CWC. 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.

Mr. Chairperson,

This session will consider the updating of the Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to the CWC. 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, including the substance used in Salisbury, to Schedule 1 will help achieve this. The European Union supports the draft decision which has been circulated. We have also taken note of the modified proposal by the Russian Federation to introduce changes to Schedule 1. This modification is a positive step and the EU looks forward to the adoption of the two proposals by consensus.

Mr. Chairperson,

While responding to new challenges, securing universal adherence to the CWC must remain a top priority. The European Union encourages the Technical Secretariat and States Parties to engage in targeted and tailor-made activities to achieve full universality.

We are living at a 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 at the heart of this all.

The European Union 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. The EU stands ready to continue its support to the capacity building efforts at national and regional level. In this context, the transformation of the OPCW laboratory into a Centre for Chemistry and Technology (CCT) will be a qualitative leap in the Organisation's capacity to perform its core tasks in verification, inspection and capacity building. We call upon all States Parties to support and contribute to this project.

The UN Secretary-General's agenda for Disarmament explicitly recognizes that gender perspectives make for more 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, the European Union commends progress made by the TS and

encourages the Director-General to continue improving gender and geographical representation 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 Él Salvador for their hard and persistent work and we welcome the solution to revitalising the facilitation framework.

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union attaches great importance to the 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 of the States Parties by a small number of States Parties is not only regrettable but against the spirit of 2013 Review Conference decision to open the annual Conference of States Parties to civil society groups.

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. The Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU has issued this statement on the website of its Embassy in The Hague.

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