

Statement by H.E. Mr. Vidmantas Purlys
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Lithuania to the Organisation for
the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
24th Session of the Conference of State Parties
National Statement

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

Lithuania aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by Ambassador Mika-Markus Leinonen, EU liaison officer to the Hague, on behalf of the European Union and would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

I would like to congratulate Ambassador Krassimir Kostov of Bulgaria for his election as the Chairperson of the 24th Session of the Conference of States Parties and to assure him of our delegation's full support. Our appreciation to Ambassador Andrea Perugini, Chairperson of the Executive Council, for his skillful efforts in guiding our work in 2019. And our commandment to the leadership of Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias.

Lithuania firmly stands by the notion that any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances is unacceptable. Unfortunately, in recent years we have witnessed repetitive use of chemical weapons and attempts to discredit investigations into these cases. Therefore, the need for a strong and effective OPCW capable of upholding and protecting the Convention is more important than ever. It is the responsibility of every state party to take determined action to dissuade would-be perpetrators from undermining the CWC, which could lead to the loss human life and suffering.

We welcome the progress made by the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to identify those responsible for chemical weapons attacks in Syria. We look forward to their first report issuing in due course. It is an important step towards the goal of strong and effective OPCW. Equally we continue to support tireless efforts Technical Secretariat of the OPCW in promoting accountability.

Lithuania also calls on all States Parties to support the adoption of the Director General's draft budget which will enable the OPCW to continue its vital work throughout 2020.

It is essential that the CWC remains responsive to new and emerging threats. Therefore, we strongly support the proposal put forward by Canada, the Netherlands and the US to add two families of Novichok to Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to the CWC. It is an important step in the work of the OPCW.

We also welcome the initiative of Australia, Switzerland, and the US relating to the use of aerosolised central nervous system acting chemicals. We share the concerns regarding the serious health and safety risks posed by such chemicals, and the possibility of their deliberate misuse. We are pleased to co-sponsor this draft decision and look forward to its adoption.

Principles of inclusivity and transparency are at the core of the OPCW and its work, therefore Lithuania aligns itself with the statement put forward by the Ambassador of Ireland, H.E. Mr. Kevin Kelly concerning accreditation of NGOs for the CSP-24.

Mr. Chairman,

Environmental and security elements are strongly interlinked. The Convention requires States Parties to assign the highest priority to ensuring the safety of people and to protecting the environment during the implementation of its obligations when destroying the chemicals. Today we must remain conscious about our environment.

I would like to stress that environmental risks are posed not only by destruction of chemical weapons today but also by remnants of previous wars. Lithuania has been making efforts to increase the awareness of environmental effects originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea. Therefore, with our lead a UN General Assembly resolution on Cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea has been submitted for adoption for the fourth time at the 74th UNGA Session this year.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Director-General, Dear Colleagues,

Earlier today together with Poland we had held an awareness raising side event on Sea-dumped chemical weapons. The priority is to stop the active use of the chemical weapons, but in parallel, we will continuously encourage the discussion on the remnants of previous wars. Environmental risks are high and the Baltic sea is among the most affected seas of the world.

We ask that this statement be made an official document of the Conference and published on the external server and the public website of the OPCW.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.