

STATEMENT BY H.E. MARCIN CZEPELAK
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND TO THE OPCW
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*Mister Chairperson,
Director General,
Distinguished Delegates,*

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Augustin Vasques Gomez of El Salvador on his assumption of duties as the Chairperson of the Executive Council. Excellency, you can count on full engagement and support of this Delegation in the forthcoming months, also in the context of the ongoing efforts of the EC Bureau. Aligning with the EU statement, I would like to make in addition **two** general points in my national capacity.

Firstly, the outcome of our discussions this week are of fundamental importance – not only for the OPCW but for the whole international community. Beyond any doubt the conclusions of the first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) on the attribution of responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic are gravely worrisome – they require to be appropriately addressed by the Policy Making Bodies of this Organization.

Poland's position in this regard is well known and crystal clear, consequently based upon condemnation in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons. As indicated in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' statement on April 9, 2020, we believe that the report is an important element of the efforts of the international community to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. Those responsible for violating the CWC must be held accountable. It is of critical importance for respecting the international law as well as for the integrity of the whole chemical non-proliferation system. Accordingly, we reiterate our full support for the activities of the OPCW Director General and the Technical Secretariat. We have full confidence in their objectivity, independence and professionalism.

By co-sponsoring and supporting the draft decision *Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic (EC-94/DEC/CRP.2)* of July 2, 2020,, Poland aims at delivering three key messages on compliance, on credibility and on responsibility. We are fully convinced that in view of the IIT's report and its conclusions, we must act jointly and decisively in order to 1) ensure full **compliance** with the Convention, 2) protect **credibility** of the Organization , 3 demonstrate our collective **responsibility** to tackle all challenges together, as international community.

Adopting the decision will show that we do not turn a blind eye to the violation of the Convention and are ready to defend its core principles and provisions. That any use of chemical weapons cannot and will not be tolerated.

Secondly, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the OPCW is operating in a more and more demanding environment. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought serious implications for the multilateral system, adding further challenges to the functioning of international organizations, including the OPCW. The Organization has to consider how to adapt to such dynamic, unforeseen developments, also bearing in mind the financial impact the pandemic has on many States Parties. We should be fully aware of that while approaching the discussions on the **draft programme and budget for 2021** later this year, remembering at the same time that it is crucial to provide the Organization with necessary funding. The recent proposal, presented by the Director General in July, constitutes a good starting point that shall provide us with effective and balanced framework for all spectrum of the OPCW activities, critical to implementation of all pillars of the Convention.

The latest developments has made it obvious that the role of the Center for Chemistry and Technology, supported by Poland, also financially, will be growing. The enhancement of its capabilities, be it on verification, inspection and capacity building, seems to be necessary even more than ever for ongoing and future tasks. We see a clear role the Center should play in supporting States Parties, in the most innovative ways, in dealing with a whole spectrum of CWC issues, including those related to scope and objective of the Convention, just to mention central nervous system acting chemicals or sea dumped chemical weapons. Poland recognizes that all of these important issues shall remain high on our agenda during the CSP-25 preparations later this year.

Concluding, let me recall that Poland has been promoting the Chemical Weapons Convention on the international agenda for years as well as has been steadfastly supporting the full elimination of such weapons. We will continue to do so in the future, also being aware of the responsibility stemming from our current EC membership.

Thank you!