



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

Ninety-Fourth Session

7 – 9 July 2020

EC-94/NAT.22

7 July 2020

ENGLISH only

**ITALY**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ANDREA PERUGINI  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY TO THE OPCW  
AT THE NINETY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Director-General,  
Mr Chairperson,  
Excellencies and distinguished colleagues,

Italy wishes to congratulate Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez for his appointment as the new chairperson of the Executive Council. Sir, we would like to thank you for having so skilfully prepared this challenging session of the Council under exceptional circumstances. We pledge our full support to your efforts.

I would also like to express my country's gratitude to the Director-General, for his competent and wise approach in facing the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) while at the same time ensuring the effective functioning and business continuity of the Organisation. I would also like to commend his unwavering and consistent leadership, particularly in promoting and defending the founding principles of the Convention and all its bodies.

Italy also seizes this opportunity to express its full support to the Technical Secretariat, which remains committed to safeguarding the viability, the integrity, and the credibility of the Convention.

A special word of gratitude goes to the outgoing Bureau members, their Excellencies the Permanent Representatives of Guatemala, Islamic Republic of Iran, Romania, and Sudan. During the Italian chairmanship, you have played a key role supporting the Chair's efforts in preparing and chairing the sessions of the Council. With your dedication, professionalism, and personal devotion you have contributed to ensuring the efficiency and continuity in the work of the Council.

Italy fully supports the statement provided on behalf of the European Union by H.E. Ambassador Gudrun Lingner, Permanent Representative of Germany.

I would like to add some remarks on some issues that are of particular interest to my delegation.



Italy welcomes the first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) and is deeply concerned by its findings on the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force. Italy vehemently condemns all use of chemical weapons – especially against civilians – and calls for those identified as responsible to be held accountable for the acts described in the report.

Italy reiterates its full support to the implementation of the Convention and calls upon all States Parties to the Convention, as well as the wider International Community, to ensure that any violation of the Convention receives adequate response. Italy expects the Council to thoroughly assess, as soon as feasible, this clear case of non-compliance with the Convention, originating from the findings of the IIT report, consistently with the provisions of the Convention and in particular with paragraphs 35 and 36 of Article VIII, and to take any necessary action in accordance with Article XII.

This session of the Council is called to adopt one of the most important decisions in the history of the Organisation since its entry in force. Despite the worldwide taboo over the use of chemical weapons, the stark reality is that chemical weapons have continued to be used, and their re-emergence is a real concern against which we have to act. The adoption of this decision is a direct responsibility for all of us. We are obliged to exclude the possibility of the repeated use of chemical weapons in Syria or any other part of the world. We must send a strong message to the International Community that the re-emergence of these horrific weapons has never been and will never be tolerated. In this connection, Italy urges all States Parties to implement this decision by consensus and to come together again to ensure full compliance with the provisions of the Convention.

I wish to draw this Council's attention to a few specific issues.

In our opinion, emerging, new toxic chemical compounds and dual-use chemicals pose prominent challenges to the application of the provisions of the verification regime of the CWC, against which the OPCW must remain vigilant. Most of these issues are recurrent, but not new, since they were already discussed in the Preparatory Commission, where an in-depth and passionate debate was launched by the founding fathers of the Convention with the adoption of some compromises. It is necessary, in the light of developments, to continue to examine them with priority by means of objective technical consideration and analysis within the OPCW, without giving in to the temptation of loading the debate with political content and polarisation. In this regard, the adoption by consensus at the last Conference of the State Parties of the two proposed decisions for technical changes to Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention, following long debates and negotiations, remains a success. Similarly, discussions still continue on the so-called CNS-acting chemicals proposal, due to the persistence of some grey areas, which need further clarification. Italy is ready to provide its constructive contribution to finding an appropriate solution to this important issue.

Concerning the follow-up process to the Fourth Review Conference, the initiative on the facilitation framework, enhancing coordination and addressing issues on which progress is sought by States Parties, the Council expressed appreciation for the work done by the outgoing facilitators Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador and Ambassador I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja of Indonesia. I wish to address my personal gratitude for the efforts made under their leadership. We are aware that a number of important issues have been identified in the course of the consultations based on a non-discriminatory approach and without possible duplications. With a perspective for the future of the OPCW, this new

facilitation will be a useful instrument in the hands of the States Parties to submit any issues they deem relevant for consideration, as part of a mid- to long-term process. So, Italy welcomes the appointment of the new facilitators on organisational governance issues – Ambassador Matthew Neuhaus of Australia and Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre of Uruguay. We are confident that thanks to their personal skills new progress will be made in the OPCW's future priorities.

The OPCW Laboratory is an embodiment of the OPCW's commitment to science and technology, and it is central to the effectiveness and integrity of the verification regime. The proposal to transform the OPCW Laboratory into a Centre for Chemistry and Technology is a major key to enhancing the Secretariat's capacity to perform its core tasks in capacity building, in addressing new challenges, and in facilitating the implementation of Articles X and XI. Italy strongly supports this project for the effectiveness of the verification regime to keep pace with current threats and scientific and technological developments, as well as to support capacity building in States Parties in an inclusive manner.

I would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

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