



LITHUANIA

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR VIDMANTAS PURLYS PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA TO THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Lithuania fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and would like to add a few comments in my national capacity.

The Lithuanian delegation extends its gratitude to Ambassador Andrea Perugini for his leadership as the Chair of the OPCW Executive Council and his continued efforts to keep the work of the Council going in these unprecedented times. Lithuania would also like to congratulate Ambassador Agustin Vasquez Gomez for his appointment as the new Chairperson of the Executive Council and assure him of my delegation's full support during his tenure. We also continue to lend our full support and confidence in the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, along with the Technical Secretariat, to carry out their important work; we trust with full confidence in the professionalism and impartiality of the OPCW teams.

I would like to use this opportunity to underline three key points:

1. The fundamentals: Lithuania stands firmly 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 cases of chemical weapons use and attempts to discredit various impartial investigations into these cases. A strong and effective OPCW is crucial for upholding and protecting the core principles of the Convention. We support the valuable work of the Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons as we remain strongly convinced that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be brought to justice. It is also the responsibility of every State Party to take determined action to dissuade would-be perpetrators from undermining the CWC, which could lead to the violation of international law, loss of human life, and inhumane suffering.
2. The IIT report: We welcome the release of the first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to the OPCW Executive Council and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in April this year. Lithuania fully supports the comprehensive and impartial work of the IIT in preparing the report, as well as its findings. We strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force, as concluded by the report, and urge for those responsible to be brought to justice. OPCW must act in response to the IIT report. Clear and verifiable parameters must be set to bring the Syrian Arab Republic into compliance with the CWC.



My country calls on all Member States, and in particular on the members of the Executive Council, to support a decision demanding that the Syrian Arab Republic adhere to the Convention. By taking joint and decisive action, we will prevent tragedies caused by the use of chemical weapons from recurring. The use of chemical weapons by anyone is a violation of international law and can amount to the most serious of international crimes—war crimes and crimes against humanity. As the Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs has stated in the response to the release of the IIT report, “Honest and factual report by the OPCW IIT is a big step towards justice for the victims of these heinous attacks. There must be no impunity for the use of outlawed weapons”.

3. The sea-dumped chemical weapons. As our main priority today remains to stop the active use of chemical weapons, bring the perpetrators to justice, and dissuade would-be perpetrators from undermining the CWC. We should not forget the impact of the chemical remnants of previous wars. Lithuania continuously encourages the discussion on the possible challenges and threats resulting from sea-dumped chemical weapons. OPCW Scientific Advisory Board already has this issue under its radars and we continue to strongly believe in the role of the OPCW, given its knowledge and expertise, as a possible coordinator of discussions on this issue in cooperation with the States Parties, other international organisations, relevant industries, academia, and NGOs. A successful transformation of the OPCW Laboratory into a Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) will be key to enhancing the Organisation’s capacity to perform its core tasks and to address new challenges, including those in relation to sea-dumped chemical weapons.

Looking forward, an important initiative is addressing the use of central nervous system-acting chemicals in aerosolised form for law enforcement purposes. Lithuania is a co-sponsor of the decision and supports its adoption by the Executive Council as soon as possible.

Lithuania remains fully committed to supporting efforts designed to uphold and strengthen the Chemical Weapons Convention.

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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