

STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ASTRID HARZ
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE 95th SESSION OF THE OPCW EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(The Hague, 6-9 SEPTEMBER 2020)

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

Austria is fully aligned with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by the Ambassador of Germany, Ms Gudrun Lingner. I would nevertheless like to make a few additional remarks in our national capacity. Austria thanks Ambassador Agustin Vasquez Gomez for his dedicated work as Chair of the Executive Council, we fully support your personal commitment in order to find consensus wherever possible. We would also like to thank the Director-General and the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their hard work and their dedication to the OPCW in these challenging times.

And in challenging times like these, the Organisation more than ever needs the ability to plan the work ahead. For this reason we would like to thank Programme and Budget Co-Facilitators Mr. Marcin Kawalowski and Mr. Matteo Fachinotti for their outstanding efforts. Austria fully supports the Draft Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2021 - in front of us in document EC-95/CRP.1. We have carefully followed the negotiations that were held in a constructive, transparent and inclusive atmosphere. We call on all members of the Council to join consensus and send a strong signal that the Council is united in its support for the work of the Technical Secretariat.

Mr. Chairperson,

The assassination attempt on the Russian citizen Alexei Navalny is yet another shocking use of a military chemical nerve agent of the “Novichok” group that has to be condemned in the strongest terms. Such a use of chemical weapons is absolutely unacceptable. We commend Germany and the Technical Secretariat for their ongoing cooperation. We call on the Russian Federation to ensure an impartial and transparent investigation in cooperation with the OPCW.

Impunity for the use of chemical weapons is not an option, not in the case of Mr Navalny and not in the case of the Syrian Arab Republic. For this reason, Austria continues to fully support the work of the Technical Secretariat, including the *Declaration Assessment Team*, the *Fact Finding Mission* and the *Investigation and Identification Team*.

Mr. Chairperson,

In closing, please let me repeat our unwavering support for the work of the OPCW and our full confidence in the Technical Secretariat. I would kindly ask you, Mr. Chairperson, to consider this statement as an official document of the 95th Session of the Executive Council and to post it on the OPCW External Server and public website.

I thank you!