

The 95th Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW

General Debate

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen

Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Norway

Mr. Chair,

Mr. Director-General,

Distinguished Colleagues,

Norway fully aligns with the statement made by Ambassador Gudrun Lingner of Germany on behalf of the European Union. I wish to add the following in my national capacity.

Norway condemns the attack with a Novichok nerve agent against the Russian citizen Aleksey Navalny. Analysis by three different national laboratories – in Germany, Sweden and France – confirm that Navalny was exposed to a Novichok agent. We strongly urge the Russian Federation to investigate this matter in the most extensive and transparent way.

We continue to vigorously condemn all use of chemical weapons, which is an abhorrent violation of the CWC and in breach of international law. We demand an end to impunity for the perpetrators of these horrific crimes.

Norway reiterates its support to the Technical Secretariat and to Director-General Fernando Arias. We have full confidence in the impartial and diligent work conducted by the Secretariat and its staff, as well as the OPCW designated laboratories. We reject all efforts to discredit the Secretariat and its staff.

We want to express our support for the proposed program and budget for the OPCW for 2021. At this critical juncture, it is vital that the organisation has an appropriate and predictable budget. Norway commends the Secretariat for proposing a budget without any increase in the assessed contribution from the States Parties. The economic impact of the ongoing pandemic is felt throughout the world. Everyone must take their share of the burden, including international organisations. We also support the proposed use of cash surplus from 2018 to establish a special fund to mitigate the exceptional COVID-19 related costs and consequences for the organisation.

We express our strong support for the proposed omnibus decision covering the entire program and budget for the OPCW. The decision encompasses a number of integrated and interlinked decisions, and separate votes on these decisions would make the process both unpredictable and confusing. I would like to commend both the Secretariat and the two budget facilitators for their extensive and diligent work over the past months. I believe that all aspects of the budget have been thoroughly examined and that we have all been given the chance to raise questions and make inquiries.

Mr. Chair,

In July, the Executive Council made a very important decision in relation to the first report from the IIT on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, which concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that units from the Syrian Arab Air Force were responsible for the use of chemical weapons in three separate incidents in Syria in 2017. The Decision also establishes that Syria by direct implication still has chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities, in flagrant violation of the

CWC. The Decision demands clear and decisive actions from the Syrian authorities. We will revisit this issue in the upcoming Conference of States Parties.

Norway commends the work being done in Syria by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM). We reiterate our demand that Syrian authorities cooperate fully with all branches of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and its policy making organs, and fulfil their obligations according to the CWC without any further delay.

We would also like to express our support for the efforts to make clear that the aerosolized use of CNS-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes is prohibited under the CWC. We thank Australia, Switzerland and the United States of America for their timely initiative in this regard. We hope that an agreement soon can be reached on this matter.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, we want to commend both the Technical Secretariat and the Bureau for ensuring that this meeting could take place in a safe and responsible manner. Norway would also like to thank all the other delegations, both Executive Council members and observers, for their constructive approach and contributions in this regard.

Thank you, Mr Chair