



STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA BY

Ambassador of the Republic of Albania, H.E. Ms. Adia Sakiqi

25th SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CWC

The Hague, 30 November – 1 December 2020

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

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

I have the honour of submitting this statement on behalf of the Republic of Albania. Albania aligns with the EU CSP-25 Statement and would like to highlight in its national capacity as follows:

The Republic of Albania would like to express a great deal of appreciation to Ambassador Krassimir Kostov of Bulgaria, Chairperson of the 24th Conference of States Parties, and Ambassador Agustin Vasquez Gomez of El Salvador, Chairperson of the Executive Council, for their tireless efforts and solid guidance and execution of their duties, despite the challenges faced due to the pandemic.

We would also like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to Ambassador Jose Antonio Zabalgaitia Trejo of Mexico for his election as the Chairperson of the Conference of States Parties. Your Excellency, you have our full support and we are confident that your professionalism and experience will help us to reach a successful conclusion of the 25th Session.

We highly appreciate the statement of the Director General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, and commend the professionalism and capacity of the OPCW Technical Secretariat (TS) to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) as well as the tasks assigned by the States Parties, despite the restrictions imposed by the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic. We would also like to reiterate our appreciation for the work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and reiterate our full support and reliance on the integrity and professionalism in implementing the CWC.

Albania acknowledges and values the Director-General's long-term endeavours to further advance matters of gender balance and geographical distribution of positions within the Technical Secretariat. We would like to encourage the continuation of these initiatives, so that OPCW reflects diversity at the work-floor. We are glad to note the current gender audit, and would like to express our thanks to the Director-General for his efforts to enhance gender mainstreaming within the Organization.

Mr. Chairperson,

States Parties to OPCW are the guardians of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which in turn is the foundation of the global non-proliferation and disarmament effort. Therefore, its implementing body, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, must be appropriately funded to achieve the stated aim of the Convention: a world free of Chemical Weapons (CW).

In this regard, Albania would like to state that the Director General's proposed programme and budget for 2021 is proportionate and justified. It maintains the same level of assessed contributions for all States Parties. The budget will enable the OPCW to continue its vital work throughout 2021, including cooperation and assistance projects.

We believe that capacity building is essential to assist States Parties in fulfilling their obligations under the CWC and to cope with the fast-moving developments in science and technology. We stand ready to continue supporting the capacity building efforts at national and regional level. Moreover, we would also like to commend the Technical Secretariat's efforts in keeping the "ChemTechCentre" project on track despite the exceptional circumstances, and express our belief that the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (CCT) will further enhance the Organisation's capacity to perform its core tasks, as stipulated in the Convention.

Mr. Chairperson,

Albania reiterates that any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances, is simply unacceptable. Those responsible for the use of Chemical Weapons are to be held accountable, by all of us State Parties collectively. It is essential that the CWC remains responsive to new and emerging threats.

Albania strongly condemns the use of a toxic chemical "Novichok", as a weapon against Alexei Navalny on 20 August. The use of a such chemical nerve agent pertaining to the "Novichok" group, prohibited under the CWC, was confirmed by two OPCW designated laboratories, as well as three independent specialised laboratories in Germany, France and Sweden. We expect full cooperation with the Russian authorities to find out and punish the perpetrators.

Mr. Chairperson,

We would like to commend the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) for their efforts in issuing the first report in April 2020, which presented important progress towards identifying those responsible for Chemical Weapons use in the Syrian Arab Republic (SAR).

With regard to the elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme, Albania expresses great concern at the Syrian regime's continued breach of its obligations as a State Party to the Convention, due to its failure to destroy all of its CW and CW production facilities. This is evidenced in the findings of the IIT report.

As we as State Parties are aware, the Executive Council took a crucially important decision in July 2020 on addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic. The decision stipulates, in full accordance with the CWC, some clear and verifiable parameters for action that the Syrian Arab Republic was required to take within 90 days in order to rectify the situation and to return to fulfilling the requirements set out in the Convention.

On 14 October 2020, the Director General issued his report for the Executive Council, where it was informed that the Syrian Arab Republic had yet to declare to the Technical Secretariat of any facilities where the chemical weapons used in the three attacks specified in the IIT findings, were developed, produced, stockpiled, and operationally stored for delivery, nor any of the chemical weapons currently in its possession. In accordance with Article XII of the CWC, considering the next steps it is now upon us, the State Parties to the Convention. We support, to this end, the adoption draft decision titled "Addressing the Possession and use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" and deem it to be an appropriate response by the Conference of States Parties to the matter at hand.

Mr. Chairperson,

While responding to these unprecedented new challenges that 2020 has brought us, securing universal adherence to the CWC must remain a top priority. We would like to encourage the Technical Secretariat and States Parties to engage in targeted and tailor-made activities to achieve full universality.

We are living at a critical juncture, as on one hand, universality of the Convention and the destruction of declared chemical weapons, are not yet complete. On the other hand, we need to step up efforts to stop the re-emergence of chemical weapons. Preventing impunity and strengthening the non-use norm is at the heart of this all.

Therefore, the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention needs to be thoroughly considered. It is important to take into account lessons learnt and best practices, including those of other relevant international organisations, so that

we all are better prepared to deal with unforeseen circumstances in the present but also in the future. The aim should be to allow the OPCW to exercise its key activities - notably convening sessions or meetings of the Executive Council, in case that extraordinary circumstances occur - be it at another venue in The Hague or remotely, by using virtual meeting technology. We would like to show our appreciation to the ongoing efforts by the Director General and the TS in this regard, and are anticipating the issuing of specific proposals for further consideration by the State Parties.

I would kindly ask you Mr. Chairperson, to consider this written statement as an official document and post it on the OPCW External Server and public website.

Thank you.

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