



REGERINGSKANSLIET

**Ministry for Foreign Affairs  
Sweden**

**Statement by Sweden  
Twenty-Fifth Conference of the States Parties  
of the Chemical Weapons Convention  
H.E. Ms. Annika Markovic  
30 November 2020**

Mr. Chair,  
Mr. Director-General,  
Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me to begin by welcoming you, Ambassador José Antonio Zabalgaitia Trejo of Mexico, as the chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. I can assure you of the full support of the Swedish delegation in your endeavours.

I would also like to warmly thank Ambassador Krassimir Kostov of Bulgaria for his work as chair of the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

I would furthermore like to seize this opportunity to thank Director-General Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his leadership and his efforts in guiding us in our work, not least during these – in many ways – challenging times. Sweden wholeheartedly commends the commitment and professionalism of the Technical Secretariat and all the staff of the entire OPCW, at headquarters and in the field missions.

Sweden stands firmly behind the statement of the European Union. I wish to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

Sweden continues, along with most of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”), to be a steadfast defender of the impartiality of the OPCW in carrying out its tasks. We strongly object to the deliberate and unfounded accusations directed towards the OPCW. Our confidence in the Organisation’s credibility remains resolute, as is our support for the work of the Technical Secretariat. The expertise, integrity and professionalism of the Organisation should never be questioned by any States Party for political gain.

Let me once again reiterate Sweden's full support for the work on the OPCW in the Syrian Arab Republic and the findings in the first report of the Investigation and Identification Team ("IIT") to the OPCW Executive Council and to the Secretary General of the United Nations on 8 April 2020. We condemn in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force, as concluded by the IIT.

The report contributes to the efforts for establishing accountability for chemical weapons use. We cannot, and shall not, accept impunity for these crimes.

It is deeply regretful that the Syrian Arab Republic has not met the requirements – set out in the decision of the OPCW Executive Council of 9 July this year – to redress the situation and to return to full compliance with the Convention within 90 days. It is now up to the Conference of the States Parties to consider further measures. Sweden believes that the draft Decision "Addressing the Possession and use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" is the appropriate reaction. We appeal to States Parties to support its adoption.

It is crucial that the IIT are given the necessary prerequisites to perform the tasks assigned to them impartially and thoroughly. Sweden has contributed with funding for the IIT and we will continue to support its work on all the remaining investigations. This year our contributions to the OPCW Trust Fund for Syria Missions amount to SEK 3 million. We encourage other States Parties to also support the Fund.

It is worth repeating our firm conviction, as already expressed in the statement by the European Union, that the use of chemical weapons by anyone – be it a State or a non-State actor – anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances is a violation of international law and may amount to the most serious crimes of international concern - war crimes and crimes against humanity. It is the responsibility of all States to uphold the global norm on the non-use of chemical weapons.

Sweden condemns in the strongest terms the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny who was poisoned with a military chemical nerve agent of the "Novichok" group, as confirmed by three OPCW designated laboratories, among them the laboratory of the Swedish Defence Research Agency, as well as by two OPCW designated laboratories following an OPCW Technical Assistance Visit.

This assassination attempt against a Russian citizen took place on the territory of the Russian Federation. The Russian government must do its utmost to disclose the circumstances of this crime in full transparency and bring those responsible to justice. Sweden calls upon the Russian Federation to fully cooperate with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to ensure an impartial international investigation.

The role of the OPCW within the disarmament and non-proliferation framework remains crucial. The OPCW deserves the full support of all States Parties to the Convention – politically, technically and financially – in its efforts to uphold the global norm against chemical weapons.

Sweden welcomes the decision of the Executive Council to recommend the proposed Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2021 to this Conference.

We consider the proposed budget balanced and justified. On behalf of my country, I would like to thank the Technical Secretariat as well as the co-facilitators for their dedicated work regarding next year's budget. Sweden urges all States Parties to support the proposed budget.

The planned Centre for Chemistry and Technology, ("ChemTech Centre"), is of great importance for the OPCW's ability to carry out the mandated tasks of verification, inspection and capacity building. Sweden has together with many other States Parties made voluntary contributions to the establishment of the ChemTech Centre. We join others in calling on all States Parties to support and contribute to this project which will benefit us all.

It is a high priority for Sweden, pursuing a Feminist Foreign Policy, to ensure integration of a gender perspective into the work of non-proliferation and disarmament.

We commend the Director-General for his efforts to safeguard balanced gender representation in the OPCW, while emphasizing that further progress can still be made to ensure a more diverse Technical Secretariat. We look forward to our continued cooperation.

As a step in this process the Swedish Embassy in the Hague organised, together with the Technical Secretariat a webinar on 11 November on "Achieving Gender Balance at the Disarmament Table". The webinar was Co-chaired by Director-General Arias and myself, with the participation of a number of panellists, among them Sweden's Ambassador for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. It attracted an audience of well over one hundred participants who discussed the challenges and opportunities for achieving equal representation in the context of international disarmament. Such meaningful and substantial discussions on gender representation and gender mainstreaming will continue to support the OPCW to progress on these issues and we thank everyone who participated and hope for a continuation of this important dialogue.

I thank you Mr. Chair and ask that this statement be issued a public document of the Conference and published on the OPCW external website.