

The 25th session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention

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 aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union. I wish to add the following in my national capacity.

The Chemical Weapons Convention and its implementing body, the OPCW, are paramount in the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture.

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

We continue to vigorously condemn all use of chemical weapons which is an abhorrent violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and in breach of international law. We also demand an end of impunity for the perpetrators of these horrific crimes and express our full support and commitment to all joint efforts to this end.

In April this year, the first report from the Investigation and Identification Team of the OPCW concluded, beyond reasonable doubt, that Syrian armed forces were responsible for the use of chemical weapons on three separate occasions

in 2017. The report also established that Syria by direct implication still has chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities, another flagrant violation of the CWC. In July, a Decision by the Executive Council gave the Syrian Arab Republic a deadline of 90 days to react on the report and to comply with its obligations according to the CWC. Syria did not respond before the expiry of the deadline. We fully support the draft decision to suspend certain rights and privileges of The Syrian Arab Republic according to the Convention.

We also reiterate our support for and confidence in the work in Syria by the Declaration Assessment Team and the Fact Finding Mission. We urge the Syrian authorities to cooperate fully with all branches of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, as well as with its policy-making organs, and fulfil its obligations according to the CWC without any further delay.

Mr. Chair,

Norway condemns in the strongest possible terms the attack with a Novichok nerve agent against the Russian citizen Aleksey Navalny. Analysis by national laboratories of Germany, Sweden and France, *as well as by OPCW designated laboratories*, confirm that Navalny was exposed to a Novichok nerve agent before falling gravely ill. This attack represents a blatant violation of the CWC and international law. We strongly urge the Russian Federation to investigate this matter in the most extensive and transparent way. Norway is aligned with the European Union in imposing restrictive measures against six Russian individuals and one entity in the context of the assassination attempt against Mr. Navalny.

Norway supports the proposed program and budget for the OPCW for 2021, as recommended by the Executive Council. It is vital that the Organisation has an appropriate and predictable budget. The economic impact of the ongoing

pandemic is felt throughout the world and everybody 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.

Mr. Chair,

Norway 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 and we hope that agreement can be reached on this matter soon.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, we want to commend both the Technical Secretariat and the General Committee for their hard work to ensure that this Conference of States Parties can convene in a safe and responsible manner, in order to approve the program and budget for 2021. We look forward for the Conference to convene again as soon as the ongoing pandemic allows.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.