



*The Permanent Representation of the Italian Republic  
to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons*

ITALY

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF ITALY TO THE OPCW  
AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Mr. Director-General,  
Distinguished delegates,

I wish to congratulate you, Ambassador José Antonio Zabalgoitia Trejo of Mexico, for your election as the Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of States Parties. Sir, 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 in these unique circumstances.

I would also like to express our appreciation and pay a special tribute to the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador H.E. Mr Krassimir Kostov of Bulgaria who, thanks to his vast experience, led the organization of this session of the Conference in particularly and unique conditions.

We would like also to pay tribute to Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador for his outstanding performance and efforts in guiding the Executive Council.

I also take this opportunity to express my country's gratitude to the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his outstanding leadership particularly in promoting and defending the founding principles of the Convention. Furthermore, Italy is pleased to reiterate its appreciation to the OPCW staff's commitment to the mandate of the Organisation and for the efforts provided in its fulfilment. In particular, I would like to restate our full confidence in the expertise, objectivity, and impartiality of the work of the Finding Fact Mission, Investigation and Identification Team and Declaration Assessment Team.

Mr Chairperson,

Italy is fully aligned with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by the H.E. Ambassador Marjolijn van Deelen, special envoy for disarmament and non-proliferation. I would like to focus on some issues of particular concern to my delegation.

While welcoming the steady progress towards the destruction of stockpiles of chemical weapons globally under the Secretariat verification, we are deeply disturbed and concerned that such heinous weapons have still repeatedly been used, causing pain and suffering to unarmed civilians.

To this regard, the Convention is fully equipped with all the appropriate instruments to deal with such an emerging challenge, but for the Convention to be effective, its States Parties have to make full use of it. In particular, attribution, based on fact-finding is clearly part of the OPCW's remit. Furthermore, there is no barrier to the OPCW getting involved also in identification of responsibility for chemical weapons use, because nothing in the Convention precludes such a role for the Organisation. In particular, without such role, it is not possible for the OPCW to fully exercise its powers under the Convention. In fact, the Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties cannot take measures to redress a situation of non-compliance, as envisaged by Articles VIII, IX and XII, unless the hurdle of attribution is cleared.

So, the attribution of responsibility for the use of chemical weapons must entail consequences. Inaction and the ensuing lack of accountability for the use of chemical weapons would set a dangerous precedent and substantially weaken the international norm. As a matter of fact, the Conference is fully entitled through the Convention to address doubts or concerns regarding compliance and cases of non-compliance, as they are to "certify" failure to comply with the chemical weapons ban. Therefore, Italy is co-sponsoring the draft decision on "addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" (C-25/DEC/CRP.10) suspending certain rights and privileges, until Syria comes into compliance with the Convention

Mr Chairperson,

In the recent years, Italy also noted with growing concern the repeated use of chemical weapons in attempts to eliminate individuals in and outside Europe. These acts are unacceptable and intolerable since, in addition to being against international

standards, they are, above all, a clear violation of the founding principles of the Convention (Art. I. III) and put in jeopardy the international non-proliferation regime.

To this regard, Italy expresses deep concern and indignation about the identification by the competent German authorities of a nerve agent as the cause of the poisoning of Russian activist Alexei Navalny. It is a crime that we strongly condemn, and that makes urgent the need for the Russian Federation to clarify quickly and transparently the responsibility of the incident and to cooperate with the Organisation in the exercise of all its functions.

Mr Chairperson,

Italy fully supports the Director-General's proposed programme and budget for 2021 adopted by the Council and now submitted, together with its recommendation to the Conference for approval. The programme and budget is drawn up in compliance with the decision adopted by the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties, which shows that the Organisation needs to be equipped with the necessary instruments to face emerging challenges. Such new scenarios will need to be reassessed against the guidance of the States Parties pertaining to zero nominal growth.

Notwithstanding the above, we remain concerned about the financial problems that the OPCW is still facing, in particular those caused by failure to honour the assessed annual contributions to the OPCW, which constitutes non-compliance with the obligations under the Convention, and which undermines the capacity of the Secretariat to fully discharge its core tasks and activities, thereby diverting resources otherwise destined to the assistance of those States Parties that are in need of support.

Therefore, we call on all States Parties to fulfil their obligations in order to contribute to replenish the OPCW's Working Capital Fund, as required by the Financial Regulations.

Mr Chairperson,

Italy expresses its appreciation for the engagement of the civil society in the work to uphold the global norm against the use of chemical weapons. Therefore, the participation of NGO representatives approved by the Organisation's guidelines is welcomed at the annual Conference of the State Parties.