



Embassy of Finland
The Hague

**Statement by Finland
Ambassador Päivi Kaukoranta
Permanent Representative of Finland to the OPCW
Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the OPCW
The Hague, 30 November – 1 December 2020**

Mr. Chairperson, Mr. Director-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finland wishes to congratulate you, Ambassador Jose Antonio Zabalgoitia Trejo of Mexico for your election as the Chairperson of the Conference of the States Parties and express our readiness to work with you for a successful outcome of the Conference. I also want to thank Ambassador Krassimir Kostov of Bulgaria, the Chairperson of the 24th Conference of the States Parties and Ambassador Agustin Vásquez Gómez for his professionalism and commitment in chairing the Executive Council.

Finland would also like to express our gratitude to Director-General Fernando Arias and the Technical Secretariat for their tireless work and determination in ensuring the implementation of the Convention despite the unprecedented challenges that we all are facing due to the ongoing pandemic of Covid-19. We reaffirm Finland's full and unwavering support and confidence to the OPCW Technical Secretariat's expertise, objectivity, impartiality, and independence.

Finland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. In addition, I wish to highlight a few issues from a national perspective.

Mr. Chairperson,

Finland is deeply concerned about the fact that since 2012 chemical weapons have been repeatedly used and the Chemical Weapons Convention clearly violated. We must not allow this to continue. We must remain vigilant to the threat for international peace and security that the use of chemical weapons continues to constitute. The use of chemical weapons—by anyone and under any circumstances—is completely unacceptable and is a clear violation of international law, and may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. Finland is committed to fight against the impunity for the use of chemical weapons.

Finland condemns in the strongest possible terms the attempted assassination of the Russian citizen and politician Mr. Alexei Navalny on Russian territory by a chemical nerve agent belonging to the “Novichok” group. We continue to call on the Russian Government to conduct an impartial, transparent, and thorough investigation of the incident and to disclose the circumstances of this crime and to bring to justice those responsible for it. To guarantee an impartial and transparent investigation, it is imperative that Russia fully cooperate with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We encourage Russia to work closely with the Technical Secretariat to finalize her request for technical assistance and evaluation for investigating and disclosing the circumstances of the poisoning.

The use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime is deeply concerning. Finland highlights the importance of the decision of the Executive Council (EC-94/DEC.2) of 9 July which was extensively consulted upon and carefully drafted in accordance with the Convention. Since the Syrian Arab Republic has not completed the required obligations set out in the decision, Finland fully supports the adoption of the draft decision “*Addressing the Possession and use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic*” and urges other States Parties to do the same.

Finland has supported the establishment of the IIT and OPCW’s work in Syria from the start, both politically and financially. We will continue to support the efforts of the IIT on all the remaining investigations.

Mr. Chairperson,

In order to carry out its mandated activities, the Organisation needs adequate resources. Finland supports the Director-General's proposed programme and budget for 2021 and encourages the States Parties to support the adoption of the Director-General's draft budget. In the past year, Finland has also made two contributions totaling €200,000 to support the activities of the Trust Fund for Syria Missions at the OPCW and the project to upgrade the current OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store through the construction of a new Centre for Chemistry and Technology ("ChemTech Centre").

Finland supports the nomination of the new external auditor of the OPCW through the establishment of a panel of Ambassadors that will evaluate the candidatures based on their technical merits in order to safeguard the interests of the Organisation.

To conclude, I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the external server and public website.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.