



OPCW

Executive Council

Ninety-Fifth Session
6 – 9 October 2020

EC-95/NAT.35
6 October 2020
ENGLISH and FRENCH only

FRANCE

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LUIS VASSY
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
UNDER AGENDA ITEM 6(G)**

Mr Chairperson,

The criminal act perpetrated against Alexei Navalny on 20 August, on the territory of the Russian Federation, has given Russia another opportunity, here before us, to embark upon a new disinformation campaign.

A disinformation campaign that is aimed at betraying the facts and discrediting the OPCW Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”). We cannot accept this.

France reiterates its full support to the OPCW and its Director-General, and its full confidence in its independent and impartial work, and in its internationally renowned expertise and professionalism.

In the present case, the Secretariat acted within the strict confines of its mandate, that is to say the mandate that was given to it by the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”).

Whenever a State requests assistance from the OPCW Secretariat under subparagraph 38(e) of Article VIII of the Convention, that assistance is implemented within a bilateral framework, and is not intended to be known by all of the other States Parties, except when the requesting State deems that such communication is appropriate. The confidentiality of the exchanges between the Secretariat and a State Party is the hallmark of the Organisation’s impartiality and professionalism.

Confidence in the Secretariat, and in the respect of the confidentiality of its exchanges with the States Parties and the protection of data, is essential. We must be able to have this relationship of trust with the Secretariat, in particular when it has to do with technical assistance that we need.

Each State must be able to request the assistance of a neutral international actor for each case of use or suspected use of a chemical weapon. This is in the interest of all of us here.



Returning to the facts, it is imperative that the circumstances under which this act was committed be clearly and fully established, and that those responsible be identified and brought to justice. Russia, on whose territory this additional violation of international law took place, must provide clarification. This clarification must be given quickly and be credible. Russia's immediate, transparent, and bona fide cooperation with the OPCW is paramount to this end. Instead of that, we see that Russia is attempting to call into question the foundation of the OPCW's work. We trust completely the expertise of the OPCW and its analyses of samples undertaken, the findings of which have just been made.

This is not a bilateral matter between Germany and the Russian Federation, as one would have you believe.

This is a violation of international law that concerns all of us as States Parties to the Convention. Any use of chemical weapons is a challenge to this near-universal instrument, which a pillar of our collective security. I reiterate solemnly that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, anytime, by anyone, and for whatever reason is unacceptable and contravenes the international norms against the use of these weapons. Everything must be done to shed light on the circumstances of this additional violation, and the perpetrators must be prosecuted. The international community must remain seized of this matter for as long as that is not the case.

The Russian Permanent Representative indicated that a request for judicial cooperation had also been addressed to the French authorities. That is indeed the case, and the request is currently being examined by the competent authorities in Paris.

I would ask that this statement be considered as an official document of this session of the Executive Council and that it be published on the OPCW's internal and external servers.

Thank you.

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