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ITALY

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ANDREA PERUGINI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, I wish to pay a special tribute to you, Mr Chairperson, for your remarkable adeptness in steering our proceedings under exceptional circumstances. I also take this opportunity to congratulate and commend the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his outstanding leadership, particularly in promoting and defending the founding principles of the Convention, thanks to his high professional qualities, his integrity, and his vast experience.

Italy is pleased to reiterate its appreciation of the OPCW staff for their commitment to the mandate of the Organisation and for the efforts they have made for its fulfilment. We have full confidence in the expertise, integrity, impartiality, and independence of the Technical Secretariat.

Italy is fully aligned with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by the Ambassador of Germany, Ms Gudrun Lingner. 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, we are deeply disturbed and concerned that such heinous weapons are being repeatedly used, causing pain and suffering in breach to the Convention. We share the widespread sense of shock and condemnation, and reiterate the need to promptly react in order not to give acquiescence to what unfortunately seems to be an alarming emerging trend, and one which we totally reject.

In this regard, the Convention is fully equipped with all the appropriate instruments to deal with such an emerging challenge. To be effective, it is up to the States Parties to make full use of the Convention and protect its integrity. Inaction and the ensuing lack of accountability for the use of chemical weapons can set a dangerous precedent and substantially weaken the international norm. Impunity for the use of chemical weapons will not be tolerated.



The Syrian dossier will remain a priority for the Council until the International Community is confident that Syria is free of all chemical weapons and fully committed to the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We expect the Syrian Arab Republic to comply with all the Council's decisions and call for the resolution of all pending discrepancies and uncertainties regarding the elimination of its chemical programme in order to return to full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In the recent years, Italy 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 and put in jeopardy the international non-proliferation regime.

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 even more urgent the need for the Russian Federation to clarify quickly and transparently the responsibility of the incident.

As a matter of fact, the Council and the Conference are 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. In this domain the Convention's centrality is without doubt.

Finally, Italy recognises the future challenges that the Organisation has to face to ensure the continuity of knowledge and expertise within the OPCW. In this connection we wish to express our appreciation on next facilitations on the OPCW tenure policy, to which we pledge our support. It is important that the Secretariat be allowed the necessary flexibility in retaining critical technical competences that are vital to implement its mandate. Such competences should not be dissipated, and the Director-General should be allowed the necessary authority in this regard in cooperation with the Council.

The requirement for States Parties to implement and extend national penal legislation in order to criminalise all activities undertaken by natural and legal persons that are prohibited to a State Party by the Convention, remains one of the most important priorities of the Convention. Without adequate domestic penal legislation related to the Convention, violations may go unpunished and compliance may suffer. Just as the use of chemical weapons is condemned, equally efficient measures need to be put in place to identify those responsible for such appalling chemical weapon attacks.

Italy supports the OPCW's Draft Programme and Budget for 2021 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.

I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Ninety-Fifth Session of the Executive Council and posted on the OPCW external server and website.

Thank you.

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