LITHUANIA

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR VIDMANTAS PURLYS PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA TO THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mr Chairman,

Lithuania fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and would like to add several comments in its national capacity.

The Lithuanian delegation thanks Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez for all the preparatory work for this session as the chair of the Executive Council and assures him of this delegation's full support. The Lithuanian delegation also appreciates the leadership of the OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias. We have full trust in the effective and impartial work of the Technical Secretariat in implementing its functions.

Lithuania stands firmly by the notion that any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances is unacceptable, and that there should be no impunity for the use of chemical weapons. Lithuania condemns in the strongest possible terms the heinous attack on Alexei Navalny, with the use of a nerve agent from the Novichok group, as confirmed by three independent specialised laboratories from Germany, France, and Sweden. This assassination attempt, which took place on the territory of the Russian Federation, is a blatant violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and international law. We fully support the OPCW's role in the investigation of this case while calling on the Russian Federation to cooperate, to be transparent, and immediately disclose any information relevant to the OPCW's work.

Lithuania strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force as concluded by the first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to the OPCW Executive Council and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 8 April 2020. Following the report, on 9 July 2020, the Executive Council took an important decision (EC-94/DEC.2), setting a timeframe and clear actions for the Syrian Arab Republic to take regarding its possession and use of chemical weapons. As the deadline set in the decision fast approaches, we regret to note that the Syrian Arab Republic has not yet fulfilled its obligations. We urge the Syrian Government to cooperate in good faith with the OPCW, to complete all of the measures contained in paragraph 5 of the decision immediately, and to return to full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. We are looking forward to the report of the OPCW Technical Secretariat on this matter. Lithuania continues to lend full support to the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, along with the OPCW teams, and remains fully confident in their professionalism and impartiality.

At the same time, Lithuania supports the valuable work of the Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons and remains strongly convinced that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be brought to justice.

With regard to the upcoming decisions at the Executive Council, Lithuania co-sponsors and supports the adoption of the draft decision relating to the use of aerosolised central nervous system(CNS)-acting chemicals. Aerosolised CNS-acting chemicals shall not be used for offensive purposes nor for law enforcement purposes.

Facing the unprecedented circumstances this year, it is our responsibility to keep strengthening the OPCW and its capabilities to perform its core tasks in verification, inspection, and capacity building. I am pleased to announce that the Lithuanian Government has decided to make a voluntary contribution to the establishment of the ChemTech Centre—in support of this very important project that will benefit all Member States.

Lithuania remains fully committed to supporting efforts designed to uphold and strengthen the Chemical Weapons Convention.

I would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

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