

**Statement of North Macedonia**  
**by Mr. Toni Pavloski, Director for Multilateral Relations and Security**  
**Cooperation**  
**at the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of the State Parties of the Chemical**  
**Weapons Convention**  
**The Hague, 30 November – 1 December 2020**

Mr. Chairman,

Delegation of North Macedonia wishes to express its appreciation to Ambassador Krassimir Kostov of Bulgaria, Chairperson of the 24th Conference of States Parties and Ambassador Agustin Vasquez Gomez of El Salvador, Chairperson of the Executive Council, for their diligent work and enormous efforts put in fulfilling their duties. I would also like to congratulate to Ambassador Jose Antonio Zabalgaitia Trejo of Mexico for his appointment as the Chairperson of the Conference of States Parties and to extend our gratitude to the OPCW Director-General Ambassador Fernando Arias for his able guidance under this hard circumstances caused by the COVID – 19 pandemics to ensure the implementation of the Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

North Macedonia remains a steadfast supporter of the Chemical Weapons Convention implementation and bears full confidence in the professional, transparent and impartial work carried out by OPCW and its Technical Secretariat. We stress the importance of continued information sharing with the United Nations Secretary-general and the UN Security Council.

We strongly believe that the Convention remains one of the key instruments of the international non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. Therefore, it is important that all States Parties demonstrate their strong commitment to the Convention, and prevent the appalling threat of re-emergence of chemical weapons. The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances is a violation of international law and can amount to the most serious of international crimes. It is our firm conviction that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

Ladies and Gentleman,

We most strongly condemn the use of a nerve agent of the “Novichok” group in the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny, as confirmed by three independent specialised laboratories from Germany, France and Sweden as well as by two OPCW designated laboratories following an OPCW Technical Assistance Visit (TAV) (Ref. S/1906/2020, dated 6 October 2020).

We urge the Russian Federation on whose territory the attack happened, to assist the Conference and disclose all available information connected to the circumstances of this chemical weapons attack. We welcome the request made by the Russian Federation for technical assistance from the

Technical Secretariat, with reference to Article VIII, paragraph 38(e) of the Convention, and sincerely hope that the specifics of this request will be finalised in order to enable a positive outcome.

Furthermore, North Macedonia 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. We supported the consequent Decision of the Executive Council (EC-94/DEC.2 of 9 July 2020) which aimed to set clear parameters for action on behalf of the Syrian Arab Republic in order to return to full compliance with CWC.

We regret to note that the OPCW Director-General in his report to the Executive Council on 14 October 2020 (ref. EC-96/DG.1), informed that the Syrian Arab Republic failed to provide the requested information about the facilities where the chemical weapons used in the 24, 25 and 30 March 2017 attacks were developed, produced, stockpiled, and operationally stored for delivery, nor any chemical weapons it currently possesses.

Therefore, it will be upon the Conference of the States Parties to consider further action. North Macedonia supports the adoption of the draft Decision "Addressing the Possession and use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" by the Conference of States Parties.

Distinguished representatives of States Parties,

North Macedonia is in favor of the proposed programme and budget for 2021 as we believe that it will enable OPCW to convene its activities for full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention as one of the main pillars of the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime. We support the adoption of the Director-General's draft budget as recommended by the Executive Council.

North Macedonia believes that the external auditor of the OPCW should be nominated based on technical merits and that a panel of Ambassadors should be established to assess the nominations on the basis of the factors set forward in S/1824/2020.

Finally, North Macedonia supports the transformation of the OPCW laboratory into a Centre for Chemistry and Technology (CCT).

Thank you for your attention.