

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Excellences,

Next year, on April 29, we are going to celebrate 25 years since entering into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the establishment of the OPCW – one of the greatest achievements in the global strife for peace.

Six months later, in October next year, in Moscow, in Russia, tens of families and we will be reliving a great tragedy that took place in 2002 and will be mourning the 125 parents and children who lost their lives as a result of the use of aerosolized CNSACs in a law-enforcement situation.

The risks posed by CNS-acting chemicals have been consistently raised since 2003 by the SAB and the Directors-General of the OPCW.

As a result, for 17 years now the OPCW has been the only intergovernmental platform where the aerosolized use of CNS for law-enforcement purposes has been the subject of studies and discussions.

The Scientific Advisory Board in its Report to the First Review Conference in 2003 noted that “the science related to such agents is rapidly evolving, and that results of current programmes to develop such “non-lethal” agents should be monitored and assessed in terms of their relevance to the Convention. However, based on past experience and the fact that many of these compounds act on the central nervous system, it appears unlikely from a scientific point of view that compounds with a sufficient safety ratio would be found.”

In this context, “the SAB stressed the importance that all new toxic chemicals, no matter what their origin or method of synthesis, are covered by the Convention's definition of chemical weapons... The SAB underlined the importance of this aspect of the definition of Chemical Weapons as a safeguard for the validity of the Convention.”

The SAB followed on this issue in its report to the Second Review Conference in 2008.

In its 15th report in 2010 the SAB presented the results of studying the history of the development of incapacitating chemical agents since the 1950s.

In its 16th report in 2011 the SAB noted that “the most recent attention has focused on opioids of the fentanyl class. They are reported to have been components of the agent used in ending the siege of a Moscow theatre in 2002.”

In 2012 the SAB reported to the Third Review Conference that “in the view of the SAB the technical discussion on the potential use of toxic chemicals for law enforcement purposes has been exhaustive” and recommended that “the Secretariat start preparations for verification activities, relevant to incapacitating chemicals that could be required in an investigation of alleged use.”

In 2017, when presenting the SAB recommendations to include CNS-acting chemical data into the OPCW Central Analytical Database (OCAD), Mr Cheng Tang, [then] Vice-Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Board and advisor to the National Authority of the

People's Republic of China, stressed: "CNS active chemicals are drawing increasing attention; their analytical data should be added to the OCAD database."

And finally: In its Report to the Fourth Review Conference in 2018 the SAB concluded that the "technical discussions of so-called "incapacitating chemicals" or central nervous system-acting (CNS) chemicals remain exhausted. The SAB sees no value in revisiting this topic as scientific facts remain unchanged since the SAB first considered the issue."

The work of the SAB continued in the years to day and was always meeting the adequate response from the Directors-General and the Technical Secretariat.

What was missing was adequate action from the States Parties.

Bulgaria would like to acknowledge Switzerland for its leadership in raising attention to this important issue as well as Australia, the United States of America and other States Parties for organizing the numerous side-events with the participation of top-scientists and experts from the capitals, for their contributions to the rigorous discussions on the technical, legal and humanitarian aspects of the debate on the Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals (CNSACs) that have taken place and that were attended by colleagues from all States Parties, including the ones present here today.

As a result of this work, today it is firmly and objectively established that:

CNS-acting chemicals are toxic chemicals.
They are not riot control agents.
Some are as lethal as nerve agents as, for example, sarin.
Their dose cannot be controlled in aerosol form.
None of them has a sufficient margin of safety identified.

17 years since the beginning of work on the CNSACs issue it is high time to act.

That is why Bulgaria joined other 40 more States Parties that have consistently raised the problem of the aerosolization of central nervous system-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes in documents presented to the 21st, 22nd, Fourth Review, and the 25th Conference of the States Parties.

That is why we decided to join as co-sponsor the Draft-Decision "Understanding Regarding the Aerosolized Use of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals (CNSACs) for Law Enforcement Purposes" and we appeal to all members of the Council and to all States Parties to support it.

By adopting this decision we will prevent the use of aerosolized CNSACs for offensive purposes by State and non-State actors.

By adopting this decision we will reconfirm the fact that the Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW are a vital, effective, growing and constantly modernizing itself organism that guarantees adequate responses to the challenges that we face now and may face in the future.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.