

The 96th Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW

General Debate

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen

Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Norway

Mr. Chair,

Mr. Director-General,

Distinguished Colleagues,

Norway fully aligns itself with the statement made by Ambassador Rosa Batoreu of Portugal on behalf of the European Union.

I wish to add the following in my national capacity.

Norway reiterates its support to the Technical Secretariat and to Director-General Fernando Arias in particular. We have full confidence in the impartial and diligent work conducted by the Secretariat, its staff and the OPCW designated laboratories. We reject all efforts to discredit the Secretariat and its staff.

Norway condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the use of a Novichok nerve agent against the Russian citizen Alexei Navalny. Analysis by two OPCW designated laboratories, as well as independent laboratories from different countries, have all confirmed that Navalny was exposed to a Novichok agent before falling gravely ill. This attack against a civilian citizen represents a blatant violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We urge The Russian Federation to disclose and credibly explain the circumstances of this matter.

We continue to vigorously condemn all use of chemical weapons under any circumstances. Accountability for any such act must be ensured.

Mr. Chair,

Norway would like to commend the work being done in Syria by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). We urge the Syrian authorities to cooperate fully with all branches of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, as well as with its policy making organs, and fulfil its obligations according to the CWC without any further delay.

In July last year, the Executive Council made an important decision in relation to the first report from the IIT, which concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Air Force used chemical weapons in three separate incidents in March 2017. The Decision establishes that Syria by direct implication still has chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities, another clear violation of the CWC. The situation is grave and requires firm and decisive action from the States Parties to the convention. We therefore

stand as co-sponsor to the draft decision that will be voted upon in the resumed session of the 25th session of the Conference of States Parties later this year.

Norway supports the efforts to make clear that the aerosolized use of central nervous system-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes is prohibited under the CWC. We thank Australia, Switzerland and the United States of America for their timely initiative. We stand as co-sponsor to the draft decision that is now put before the Council. We urge all members of the Council to support it.

In conclusion, we commend both the Technical Secretariat and the Bureau for ensuring that this meeting could take place in a safe and responsible manner. Norway would also like to thank all the other delegations, both Executive Council members and observers, for their constructive approach and contributions in this regard.

Thank you, Mr Chair