

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Vidmantas Purlys
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Lithuania to the Organisation for the
Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council**

9-12 March 2021

Mr. Chairperson,

Mr. Director-General,

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Lithuania aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Rosa Batoreu, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the OPCW on behalf of the European Union and would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

We pay tribute to Ambassador Agustin Vasquez Gomez of El Salvador as the Chairperson of the Executive Council of the OPCW for his professionalism and dedication in steering the work of the Council. Our delegation also expresses sincere appreciation for the tireless efforts and strong leadership of Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias. We reiterate Lithuania's full confidence in the effective and impartial work of the Technical Secretariat in implementing its functions under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

We are deeply concerned that Russia did not disclose the circumstances of the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny who was poisoned in Russia by a military grade chemical nerve agent of the "Novichok" group in August 2020. Moreover, we are deeply disappointed that on 16 December 2020 Russia has withdrawn its request for a Technical Assistance Visit by the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW which could have helped clarify the issues.

The use of "Novichok" in this attack against Mr. Navalny has been confirmed by specialised laboratories in Germany, France and Sweden, as well as by the OPCW, which constitutes a violation of the CWC. We condemn such blatant violation of the CWC and strongly support the efforts of bringing those responsible for this heinous attack to justice. On 15 October 2020 under its chemical weapons sanctions regime, the European Union imposed restrictive measures against six Russian individuals and one entity responsible for inducing and providing support to the poisoning of Alexei Navalny with the Novichok nerve agent. We urge Russia to disclose fully the circumstances of the assassination attempt without further delay and bring the perpetrators to justice.

We regret that the Syrian Arab Republic has not fulfilled its obligations following the Decision of the Executive Council (EC-94/DEC.2). This situation has caused grave concern about the commitment of the Syrian Arab Republic to uphold the norms of the CWC, which it has decided to adhere when signing up to the Convention. As an appropriate response, we support the draft Decision "Addressing the Possession and use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" (C-25/DEC/CRP.10, dated 25 November 2020) and we urge all State Parties to support the adoption of the draft Decision in the resumed session of the CSP-25 later this spring.

We look forward to the release of the next IIT report on Syria and stand ready to work on ensuring the full follow up of all findings. We fully support the Investigation and Identification Team and its important work.

Impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not be tolerated. We must also take all necessary action to ensure that the global norm prohibiting the use of chemical weapons is not compromised. In this regard, Lithuania continues to support the valuable work of the Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

Lithuania is a co-sponsor 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 and for law enforcement purposes. After 10 years of deliberations we look forward to its adoption.

We ask that this statement be made an official document of the Conference and published on the external server and the public website of the OPCW.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.