

**The 96th Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW**  
**General Debate**  
**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Yeondoo Jeong**  
**Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the OPCW**

**9 March 2021, The Hague**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Mr. Director-General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Chairperson Ambassador Agustin Vasquez Gomez of El Salvador for his able leadership through these challenging times. Under his guidance and with his determination, I believe this session of the Executive Council will indeed deliver tangible outcomes. I assure you of my delegation's full support.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes to Director-General Fernando Arias and all the staff members of the Technical Secretariat for their tireless efforts to fulfill their missions despite the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis. Their professionalism and devotion are commendable.

Mr. Chairperson,

Since the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1997, we have truly engaged in collective efforts to uphold international norms against repeated use of chemical weapons, as witnessed in a number of cases including in Syria, Malaysia, and the UK. One of our recent achievements is a decision adopted in November 2019 to add nerve agents known as "Novichok" and other highly toxic chemicals into Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals.

However, another use of a nerve agent from the Novichok Group in poisoning Mr. Alexei Navalny, which was confirmed by the OPCW, has undermined our shared vision of achieving a world free of chemical weapons. The Government of the Republic of Korea notes with serious concern that a nerve agent was used as a chemical weapon to poison an individual in Russia. The Republic of Korea condemns in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons – anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstance. All those responsible for chemical weapons use must be held accountable for such crimes which cannot be tolerated.

In this context, Korea encourages Russia, on whose territory the attack took place, to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to disclose all the circumstances around the incident in a transparent and impartial manner.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Republic of Korea reiterates its unwavering support for the OPCW Syria-related mechanisms such as the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). The three teams have continued to fulfill their mandates in a transparent, independent, impartial, and professional way. We note with appreciation that the Secretariat continues to carry out its operations in Syria even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the 24<sup>th</sup> round of consultations with Syria.

The EC Decision EC-94/DEC.2 (9 July 2020), adopted last year and supported by the ROK as a co-sponsor, was a responsible action by the Executive Council in response to the first report of the IIT, which concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force used sarin and chlorine as chemical weapons in March 2017. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic as a State Party to take all necessary steps to come into compliance with the Convention, including those stated in the forementioned Decision, and to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat. We also look forward to further reports by the IIT, which will be issued in due course.

As threats emanating from chemical weapons are steadily evolving, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of keeping pace with scientific and technological developments. Korea is particularly concerned that central nervous system-acting chemicals could potentially be used as chemical weapons under the guise of law enforcement activities. Against this backdrop, Korea supports, as a co-sponsor, the draft Decision on Understanding Regarding the Aerosolized Use of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals (CNSAC) for Law Enforcement Purposes. The Decision will be a meaningful step forward to take action on the issue and to safeguard the integrity of the Convention. My delegation asks all members of the Council to join in rendering their support for the draft Decision.

Mr. Chairperson,

The universal application of the Chemical Weapons Convention has been one of the key priorities for the OPCW since the establishments of the organization. Korea urges the four remaining States not Party to the Convention to join it as soon as possible without any preconditions. We would also like to request that the Technical Secretariat continue its efforts to achieve universality at the earliest possible time.

Korea expresses its appreciation to the Technical Secretariat for their continuing efforts to make progress on the Chem-Tech Centre project despite challenges brought about by the pandemic. We firmly believe that the project will contribute to strengthening the capacity of the organization, enabling it to better address evolving threats. It is against this background that Korea decided to become the first State Party to make voluntary contributions to the ambitious initiative in 2017 and continues to do so annually. We encourage all States Parties to join this noble project by pledging their political and financial commitments.

Mr. Chairperson,

In closing, I would kindly request that you circulate this statement as an official document of the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council and that it be published on the OPCW website and external server.

Thank you. /END/