



**OPCW**

**Conference of the States Parties**

Twenty-Fifth Session  
30 November – 1 December 2020 (Part I)

C-25/NAT.40  
30 November 2020  
ENGLISH only

**ALBANIA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ADIA SAKIQI  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA  
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION  
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,  
Mr Director-General,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour of submitting this statement on behalf of the Republic of Albania. Albania aligns itself with the EU statement delivered at the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and would like to highlight the following in its national capacity.

The Republic of Albania would like to express a great deal of appreciation to Ambassador Krassimir Kostov of Bulgaria, Chairperson of the Twenty-Fourth Conference of the States Parties, and Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador, Chairperson of the Executive Council, for their tireless efforts, solid guidance, and execution of their duties, despite the challenges faced due to the pandemic.

We would also like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to Ambassador José Antonio Zabalgaitia Trejo of Mexico for his election as the Chairperson of the Conference of the States Parties. Your Excellency, you have our full support, and we are confident that your professionalism and experience will help us to reach a successful conclusion of the Twenty-Fifth Session.

We highly appreciate the statement of the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, and commend the professionalism and capacity of the OPCW Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”), as well as the tasks assigned by the States Parties, despite the restrictions imposed by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. We would also like to reiterate our appreciation for the work of the Secretariat staff and reiterate our full support and reliance on their integrity and professionalism in implementing the Convention.

Albania acknowledges and values the Director-General’s long-term endeavours to further advance matters of gender balance and geographical distribution of positions within the Secretariat. We would like to encourage the continuation of these initiatives, so that the OPCW reflects diversity at the workplace. We are glad to note the current gender audit, and would like to express our thanks to the Director-General for his efforts to enhance gender mainstreaming within the Organisation.



States Parties to the OPCW are the guardians of the Convention, which in turn is the foundation of the global non-proliferation and disarmament effort. Therefore, its implementing body, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, must be appropriately funded to achieve the stated aim of the Convention: a world free of chemical weapons.

In this regard, Albania would like to state that the Director-General's proposed Programme and Budget for 2021 is proportionate and justified. It maintains the same level of assessed contributions for all States Parties. The budget will enable the OPCW to continue its vital work throughout 2021, including cooperation and assistance projects.

We believe that capacity building is essential to assist States Parties in fulfilling their obligations under the Convention and to cope with the fast-moving developments in science and technology. We stand ready to continue supporting the capacity-building efforts at national and regional level. Moreover, we would also like to commend the Secretariat's efforts in keeping the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) project on track despite the exceptional circumstances, and express our belief that the ChemTech Centre will further enhance the Organisation's capacity to perform its core tasks, as stipulated in the Convention.

Albania reiterates that any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, and under any circumstances is simply unacceptable. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons are to be held accountable by all of us, the States Parties, collectively. It is essential that the Convention remains responsive to new and emerging threats.

Albania strongly condemns the use of a toxic chemical of the "novichok" group, as a weapon against Alexei Navalny on 20 August 2020. The use of such a chemical nerve agent pertaining to the "novichok" group, prohibited under the Convention, was confirmed by two OPCW designated laboratories, as well as three independent specialised laboratories in Germany, France, and Sweden. We expect full cooperation with the Russian authorities to find and punish the perpetrators.

We would like to commend the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) for their efforts in issuing its first report in April 2020, which presented important progress towards identifying those responsible for chemical weapons use in the Syrian Arab Republic.

With regard to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, Albania expresses great concern at the Syrian regime's continued breach of its obligations as a State Party to the Convention, due to its failure to destroy all of its chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities. This is evidenced in the findings of the IIT report.

As we, the States Parties, are aware, the Executive Council took a crucially important decision in July 2020 on addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic. The decision stipulates, in full accordance with the Convention, some clear and verifiable parameters for action that the Syrian Arab Republic was required to take within 90 days in order to rectify the situation and to return to fulfilling the requirements set out in the Convention.

On 14 October 2020, the Director-General issued his report for the Executive Council, where it was informed that the Syrian Arab Republic had yet to declare to the Secretariat any facilities where the chemical weapons used in the three attacks specified in the IIT findings were developed, produced, stockpiled, and operationally stored for delivery, nor any of the chemical weapons currently in its possession. In accordance with Article XII of the Convention,

considering the next steps, it is now upon us, the States Parties to the Convention. We support, to this end, the adoption of the draft decision entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” and deem it to be an appropriate response by the Conference of the States Parties to the matter at hand.

While responding to these unprecedented new challenges that 2020 has brought upon us, securing universal adherence to the Convention must remain a top priority. We would like to encourage the Secretariat and the States Parties to engage in targeted and tailor-made activities to achieve full universality.

We are living at a critical juncture, as on the one hand, universality of the Convention and the destruction of declared chemical weapons are not yet complete, and on the other hand, we need to step up efforts to stop the re-emergence of chemical weapons. Preventing impunity and strengthening the non-use norm is at the heart of this all.

Therefore, the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of the Convention needs to be thoroughly considered. It is important to take into account lessons learnt and best practices, including those of other relevant international organisations, so that we all are better prepared to deal with unforeseen circumstances in the present but also in the future. The aim should be to allow the OPCW to exercise its key activities—notably convening sessions or meetings of the Executive Council in case that extraordinary circumstances occur—be it at another venue in The Hague or remotely, by using virtual meeting technology. We would like to show our appreciation for the ongoing efforts by the Director-General and the Secretariat in this regard, and we are anticipating the issuing of specific proposals for further consideration by the States Parties.

I would kindly ask you, Mr Chairperson, to consider this written statement as an official document and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you.

--- 0 ---