



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

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

C-25/NAT.57
30 November 2020
ENGLISH only

DENMARK

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JENS-OTTO HORSLUND
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF DENMARK
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF
THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,

At the outset let me congratulate you, Ambassador José Antonio Zabalgoitia Trejo of Mexico, on the election as Chairperson of the Conference. We are confident that under your able stewardship, this session will come to a successful conclusion, and I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support. Let me also express our gratitude to Ambassador Krassimir Kostov of Bulgaria for his tireless efforts in steering the work of the Conference until now.

The use of chemical weapons can never be legitimate or lawful. Often, it will amount to a war crime or a crime against humanity, and it is always a crime. By joining the Chemical Weapons Convention, we have all undertaken to do our utmost to prevent the use of chemical weapons. Never again.

Despite this commitment—and our efforts—we have in recent times again witnessed the use of these horrific weapons in different ways. This is a clear and present threat to international peace and security. No effort must be spared in eliminating this threat now. We must put the spectre of Chemical Weapons back in its tomb. Safely locked away by our Convention.

Most recently, the world witnessed the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny. He was poisoned in Russia using a chemical nerve agent of the 'Novichok' family. The OPCW and other independent laboratories have confirmed this. Denmark condemns in the strongest possible terms this blatant violation of the Convention. Russia must immediately disclose all relevant facts and circumstances pertaining to this crime in a verifiable manner and hold those responsible—whoever they may be—to account. Denmark will follow the issue closely and stands ready to take and support measures which can further this process. We are grateful to Germany for offering Navalny the necessary medical care and to the OPCW and others for assisting in bringing some of the facts concerning the crime to light.

At its July 2020 session, the Executive Council enacted a set of clear and verifiable actions to be undertaken by the Syrian Arab Republic. This was done in response to the April 2020 report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team, which documented beyond any doubt the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime. That Council decision provided a path for Syria to redress the situation and return to full compliance with the Convention.



It is with great disappointment that we have learnt from the Director-General's report that the Syrian regime has chosen not to avail itself of this path. It has instead chosen the path of defiance. Defiance of our Convention and its obligations. It is now up to us, this Conference, to give meaning and effect to the prohibition on chemical weapons and the norms enshrined in our treaty. We believe that the draft decision "Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" is an appropriate way to do this and the bare minimum we must do to protect the integrity of the Convention and the Organisation. We call on all States Parties to exercise their duty as responsible States Parties and support the draft decision. Furthermore, those responsible for these heinous crimes must be brought to justice and we must redouble our efforts aimed at accountability. Denmark is ready to do its part, and we place great value on the Partnership Against Impunity for use of chemical weapons in this respect.

The OPCW is the guardian of the Convention and our primary tool in upholding its norms. To continue to do this as effectively, efficiently, and credibly as has been done so far, requires adequate resources. Denmark fully supports the very modest and restrained budget proposal for 2021 presented by the Director-General. This is the minimum requirements for the OPCW to meet the many expectations we rightfully have, and we commend the Director-General for delivering effectively at minimum cost. This is not the time to play political games with the essential resources of the Technical Secretariat. We call on all our fellow Parties to the Convention to support the Director-General's budget proposal as it is. In the same vein, we also support initiatives aimed at ensuring the OPCW's continued effective functioning and the implementation of the Convention during crises.

In closing, let me extend our deep and sincere gratitude to the Director-General and his staff for their outstanding performance. Denmark has full confidence in the professionalism, impartiality, and integrity of the Technical Secretariat and its staff in carrying out the many important tasks we have given them, often under adverse and difficult circumstances, lately more so than ever. This is a positive tribute to our Organisation and its leadership, but I must also deeply regret baseless, unsubstantiated, and political attacks aimed at undermining the OPCW and the Convention. Such actions will not succeed but will only strengthen our resolve to support our Secretariat and defend the Treaty.

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

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