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**RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR A. V. SHULGIN  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE  
OPCW AT THE NINETY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

At the prior session of the Executive Council, we had hoped that the situation with the coronavirus pandemic around the world would have been alleviated, and we would be able to resume working as we usually do. However, the delegations are once again forced to meet to discuss standing items on the agenda of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in a minimised format without the direct participation of our colleagues from the capitals. Naturally, this cannot help but have an impact on our work in The Hague. In this regard—and here, I think, my colleagues will agree with me—under the current conditions, we remain hostages of the situation, although in spite of it all we will try, of course, under the leadership of the honourable Chairperson, to move forward. The Russian Federation, for its part, is prepared for it and is always open to searching for a compromise.

At this meeting, the Council is meant to consider a number of extremely important and current matters. Some of them have, of course, a political tinge to them, which concerns us greatly. Frankly speaking, we see that the situation within the OPCW is sliding relentlessly downhill—more simply said, it is degrading. It would seem as though all 193 States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention are interested in strengthening it. But in fact, we are dealing with off-the-charts levels of politicisation of the work of the OPCW; ultimately, we are speaking different languages and not hearing one another. We are no longer talking about adhering to the principle of consensus, and hysteria is being whipped up more frequently, even for issues that are technical in nature.

Unfortunately, this is being done by a certain group of countries that has already been trying to impose its own personal agenda onto the OPCW for some time now, while ignoring the opinion of other States Parties. Russia cannot and will not accept this.

Within this context, it is particularly striking to see a situation developing in The Hague regarding the so-called poisoning of Mr Navalny, a Russian citizen. This concerns our relations both with the German side, and with the Technical Secretariat. In this matter, the Russian Federation initially took the most transparent and constructive position possible. In turn, the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, instead of establishing normal channels for bilateral relations in order to clarify the reasons behind what happened and entering into a dialogue with our General Prosecutor's Office, preferred instead to launch a kind of smear campaign against Russia and, without establishing the facts and without producing any kind of evidence, took this to the OPCW. This is regrettable.



This is far from the first time that we have seen the Organisation being used for geopolitical interests. All one has to do is recall everything related to forcing illegitimate attribution functions onto the OPCW. Starting from the vote that was forced through to assign to the Secretariat authorities that are extrinsic to it, and ending with the biased, non-transparent, and technically unsound work produced by the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). All of the IIT's activities are aimed at covering the prearranged findings of the alleged guilt of the Syrian Government of using chemical weapons in a cloak of pseudoscience. Yet no convincing facts are provided, and States Parties are asked to accept everything at face value and be satisfied with conclusions such as "highly likely" and "reasonable grounds to believe".

It was from this very same mould that the July session of the Council made its decision, with deliberately unfulfillable ultimatum demands and a predetermined plan of action for the future.

We categorically disagree with this type of approach and see the absolute malice of the practice of forcing the hands of the managing bodies of the OPCW through a vote on politically motivated decisions.

Within this context, we are a bit surprised by the position of the Secretariat. Unfortunately, it is with increasing frequency that it no longer carries out its functions as a technical body, and has started to participate directly in political showdowns, in one way or another playing along with the endeavours of those forces that wish to drive the work of the OPCW in the direction that works to their own advantage. There is no shortage of examples of this. One needs only to mention the revealed manipulation of the reports of the Syrian special mission that became widely known to the global public, as well as the far-from-neutral stance of the Secretariat on everything associated with attribution at the OPCW. But not only does this cast a shadow on the Secretariat, it also strikes an unprecedented blow upon the overall reputation of the Organisation itself.

We have serious complaints about the way in which work is being carried out with regard to the consideration of budgetary issues. A preprogrammed algorithm is being forced, while the process of consultations on the 2021 Programme and Budget is turning into a presentation of what has been prearranged deep within the Secretariat. The opinions of delegations that attempt to speak in favour of budgetary decisions aligned with the OPCW Financial Rules are ignored. In spite of existing norms, States Parties are being deprived of the opportunity not only to reclaim cash balances that are owed to them, but even to express their position on the reallocation thereof. Everything is decided for them.

As before, we proceed from the fact that in its current state, the initiative to strengthen the "Understanding Regarding the Aerosolized Use of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes" is premature and requires thorough examination to ensure that it is fully aligned with the norms of the Convention.

It is not enough to take a decision on certain "understandings" to implement the proposed initiative. In its national document EC-93/NAT.6, dated 6 March 2020, Russia proposed a path to resolving this matter, including the introduction of amendments to the Convention in line with Article XV thereof.

From as early as October last year, the Russian Federation led an intensive dialogue with the authors of the draft decision on the Rules of Procedure of the Advisory Board for Administrative and Financial Matters. Some of the revisions that we proposed were in fact reflected in the document in the end. However, our critical concerns were still not taken into consideration. Because no consensus was reached on this subject and negotiations have reached an impasse, we find it necessary to remove this draft decision from the agenda.

One more matter at this session is the upcoming election of the OPCW's External Auditor at the upcoming Conference of the States Parties. As is known, nothing is set out regarding the role of the Council in the appointment of this post. From the moment the candidates were determined—and Russia had nominated one of them—a number of consultations were held with interested delegations under the aegis of the Chairperson. It was not possible to determine just how the Executive Council could, in practical terms, transparently facilitate the identification of the best candidate. That is why, in our opinion, at this stage, it would be best to transfer this matter directly to the Conference, where it will be considered in a fully open and competitive manner.

In conclusion, I would like to once again return to our concerns about the current situation within the OPCW. A once altogether successful, authoritative, and specialised international body and laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013, is now in many ways paralysed and to a lesser degree capable of successfully accomplishing the tasks of strengthening the regime of the Convention. A politicised agenda has literally been foisted upon States Parties, while the views of the few are being presented as the collective opinion not only of the Organisation as a whole, but of the international community.

Ultimately, this is an unabashed example of what Russia has recently been repeating indefatigably: according to the insistence of a handful of countries, the standards of international law are being overwritten by certain rules they manufacture themselves. This is a road to nowhere.

Russia would suggest that everyone who does not remain indifferent about what is going on today in The Hague take the high road and acknowledge the level of responsibility that we all carry together in supporting peace and international security, and stand in defence of the OPCW in this challenging time.

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Ninety-Fifth Session of the Executive Council and published on the Organisation's internal and external websites.

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