
**STATEMENT OF DENMARK TO THE
96th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(The Hague, 9 - 12 March 2021)**

**DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JENS-OTTO HORSLUND
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF DENMARK TO THE OPCW**

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

Denmark aligns itself with the statement delivered by Ambassador Rosa Batoréu of Portugal on behalf of the European Union and wishes to highlight only a few points of particular importance.

Let me at the outset express our deep appreciation to Ambassador Agustin Vasquez Gomez of El Salvador for his dedication and professionalism in guiding the work of the Executive Council. I also wish to express our gratitude to the Director General Ambassador Fernando Arias, and his staff for their tireless efforts, under challenging circumstances, in discharging the mandate conferred on the Technical Secretariat by the Convention under challenging circumstances.

Mr. Chairperson,

The use of chemical weapons is a grave violation of international law, and the re-emergence of chemical weapons is a serious threat to international peace and security. It must be dealt with firmly and collectively.

Denmark condemns in the strongest terms the assassination attempt on Mr. Alexei Navalny. He was poisoned in Russia by a chemical nerve agent of the “Novichok group”, as confirmed by laboratories in France, Germany and Sweden, as well as by the OPCW itself.

It is regrettable that Russia has withdrawn its request for technical assistance from the OPCW Technical Secretariat. We reiterate our call on Russia, as a matter of urgency, to conduct an impartial and thorough investigation in full transparency and with the assistance of the OPCW, and to disclose all relevant facts pertaining to the use of ‘Novichok’ in the attack. The Prohibition on the development, possession and use of Chemical Weapons is unequivocal and absolute. Those responsible for such acts must be held to account.

Mr. Chairperson,

Without accountability the prohibition on Chemical Weapons will remain under attack and re-emergence remain a real and present threat as we have seen in Syria. Denmark strongly condemns the use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force as documented by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team. We are equally concerned about the failure of Syria to declare in full its Chemical Weapons programme as repeatedly reported by the DAT. Failure to declare, taken together with the later use of Chemical Weapons, paints a grim picture of intent and motive. Such actions must have consequences if our Chemical Weapons Regime is to remain credible. It is our collective duty, as responsible parties to the Convention, to give effect to the noble words in the Treaty’s preamble – for the sake of mankind...

The Executive Council has set clear and verifiable parameters and timelines for action required for Syria to return to full compliance with the CWC. As reported by our Director-General Syria has failed to do so. Consequently, it is the responsibility of the Conference of States Parties to take the necessary measures to redress the situation.

Denmark considers the draft Decision entitled “Addressing the Possession and use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (C-25/DEC/CRP.10, dated 25 November 2020) a measured and appropriate response to the clear violation of the core principles of the Convention. The draft Decision is co-sponsored by 46 States Parties and we fully support it. We call on all responsible States Parties to uphold the integrity of the Convention and support the adoption of this draft Decision.

Mr. Chairperson,

In closing let me reiterate Denmark’s full confidence in the Technical Secretariat, its Director General and its staff. Their professionalism, impartiality, expertise and integrity should and must be praised and preserved by all States Parties. In the same vein we reject any and all attempts at undermining the credibility and effectiveness of the organisation as the baseless political attacks they are.

I thank you Mr. Chairperson and request that this statement be treated as an official document of this session.
