

The 97th Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW

General Debate

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen

Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Norway

Mr. Chair,

Mr. Director-General,

Distinguished Colleagues,

Norway aligns itself with the statement made by Ambassador Sanja Stiglic of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union.

I wish to add the following in my own national capacity.

In April, the resumed session of the 25th session of the Conference of States Parties made an important decision in response to the first report from the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, in which the IIT found reasonable grounds to believe that Syrian Armed Forces were responsible for the use of chemical weapons in three separate incidents in 2017. The decision, which suspends Syrian voting rights and other privileges according to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), was both timely and necessary. We now urge the Syrian Arab Republic to comply fully with all its obligations under the CWC and to make sure that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons are held accountable for their actions.

Norway also commends the excellent and dedicated work that is being done in Syria by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and we reiterate that Syrian authorities must cooperate fully with all branches of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, as well as with its policy making organs. We regret that members of the DAT recently have been unable to obtain visas to access Syria, which has led to the postponement of the latest round of consultations between DAT and Syrian authorities. The DAT must be granted entry visas without any further delay. We also note with great concern that the number of outstanding issues in relation to the Syrian fulfilment of their obligations according to the CWC is actually growing, not decreasing.

Mr. Chair,

I would like to reiterate once more our deep concern in relation to the confirmed use of a Novichok nerve agent against the Russian citizen Alexei Navalny. Analysis by a number of independent laboratories have all confirmed that Navalny was exposed to a Novichok agent before falling gravely ill. This represents a blatant violation of the CWC. The Russian Federation must ensure that this matter is immediately investigated in the most extensive and transparent way possible. We continue to vigorously condemn all use of chemical weapons. Accountability for any such act must be ensured.

Norway furthermore reiterates its support for the Technical Secretariat and for Director-General Fernando Arias in particular. We reject all efforts to discredit the Secretariat and its staff and we have full confidence in the impartial and diligent work conducted by the Secretariat, its staff and all the OPCW designated laboratories. In this respect, I am happy to announce that Norway now has an OPCW Designated Laboratory, ready to contribute to the smooth functioning of the OPCW's verification regime.

Norway would also like to express our satisfaction with the decision at the 96th session of the Council concerning the aerosolized use of CNS-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes. The decision confirms that such use is prohibited under the CWC. We thank Australia, Switzerland and the United States of America for their timely initiative and we urge all states parties to vote in favour of the decision at the upcoming 26th session of the Conference of States Parties.

In conclusion, we once more want to commend both the Technical Secretariat and the Bureau for ensuring that also this meeting of the Council can take place in a safe and responsible manner. Norway would also like to thank all the other delegations, both Executive Council members and observers, for their constructive approach and contributions in this regard.

Thank you, Mr Chair