



Embassy of Finland
The Hague

**Statement by Finland
Ambassador Päivi Kaukoranta
Permanent Representative of Finland to the OPCW
Ninety-Seventh Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW
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Mr. Chairperson, Mr. Director General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finland wishes to welcome Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki in his new role as the Chairperson of the Executive Council. I would also like to express our gratitude to the OPCW Director General Ambassador Fernando Arias and his staff for all their efforts and their tireless work to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention. Let me reaffirm my country's strong support to the OPCW Technical Secretariat. Despite the on-going pandemic, the Technical Secretariat has made every effort to ensure business continuity of the OPCW. Finland has full confidence in the expertise, professionalism, impartiality and independence of the Technical Secretariat.

Finland aligns itself with the statement made by Slovenia on behalf of the European Union. In addition, I wish to highlight a few issues from a national perspective.

Mr. Chairperson,

The 25th Conference of the States Parties took a historic step in combatting impunity for the use of chemical weapons when it suspended certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic in the OPCW. The decision was taken because the Syrian Arab Republic

has continuously used chemical weapons and failed to respect its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention as has been verified and concluded by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Fact-Finding Missions (FFM), the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) as well as the Joint UN-OPCW Investigation Mechanism (JIM). Furthermore, the Decision provides a path for the Syrian Arab Republic to begin to comply with its obligations under the Convention.

Finland strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force as was concluded by the latest IIT report of April 2021. The IIT plays a key role in the fight against impunity and we look forward to the continuation of its work as well as its next report. The use of chemical weapons in all circumstances, by anyone, anywhere and at any time is a violation of international law, a threat to international peace and security, and it seriously undermines the principles of the rule-based international system. It is also an abhorrent and heinous act with indiscriminate human consequences and may amount to the most serious crimes – war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Regarding the use of a chemical nerve agent of the “Novichok” group to poison Alexei Navalnyi on the territory of the Russian Federation, Finland condemns it in the strongest possible terms. Finland regrets that the Technical Assistance Visit to disclose and explain the circumstances of the assassination attempt has not taken place and is no longer considered relevant by the Russian Federation. We urge the Russian Federation to disclose the circumstances of this chemical weapons use and to comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

For the past year and a half we have all had to adapt to new working methods and circumstances due to the on-going Covid19-pandemic. We have also understood that the future may bring similar or other specific circumstances that may not allow in-person meetings to be organised. Therefore, using virtual technology in making sure that the OPCW policy-making organs can continue to fulfil their duties might become a reality. Finland, therefore, supports the German proposal for an Executive Council Decision to

Allow for Convening Executive Council Meetings or Sessions in Emergency Circumstances and encourages others to do the same.

To conclude, I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the external server and the public website.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.