

The 97th Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW
General Debate
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Yeondoo Jeong
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the OPCW

6 July 2021, The Hague

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

First of all, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki of the Kingdom of Morocco for assuming the post of Chairperson of the Executive Council. Under his able leadership, I am confident that we can achieve tangible outcomes in these challenging times. I assure you of my delegation's full support.

I would also like to take this opportunity to appreciate Director-General Fernando Arias and all the staff members of the Technical Secretariat for their outstanding efforts to fulfill their important mandates to uphold the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) amidst the global health crisis.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Republic of Korea underlines that the use of chemical weapons cannot be tolerated anywhere, anytime, by anyone or under any circumstances. It is imperative to identify and hold accountable those who have used chemical weapons. In this spirit, the Republic of Korea emphasizes its unfaltering support for the Syria-related Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) mechanisms including the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). We appreciate the ongoing efforts of the Technical Secretariat to investigate relevant incidents in a transparent, independent, impartial, and professional way.

We are deeply concerned over the recent finding in the second report submitted by the IIT that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force used chemical weapons in Saraqib in February 2018. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic, as a State Party, to immediately take necessary actions to redress the situation and come into compliance with the Convention, as requested by the EC Decision EC-94/DEC.2 (9 July 2020) and the Conference

of the States Parties (CSP) Decision C-25/DEC.9 (21 April 2021) supported by the Republic of Korea as a co-sponsor.

Mr. Chairperson,

The use of a Novichok nerve agent as a chemical weapon in poisoning Mr. Alexei Navalny in August 2020 remains unaddressed and seriously undermines our collective efforts to achieve a chemical weapons-free world. The Republic of Korea opposes, in the strongest possible terms, any use of chemical weapons and reiterates that all those responsible for chemical weapons use must be held accountable for such intolerable crimes.

In this regard, the Republic of Korea encourages the Russian Federation, on whose territory the attack took place, to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to disclose all the circumstances around the incident transparently and impartially.

Mr. Chairperson,

We firmly believe that the OPCW should constantly strengthen its norm under the Convention to tackle evolving threats. We particularly note with concern that central nervous system-acting chemicals could potentially be used as chemical weapons under the guise of law enforcement activities.

My delegation welcomes the adoption of the EC Decision on Understanding Regarding the Aerosolised Use of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals (CNSAC) for Law Enforcement Purposes (EC-96/DEC.7, 11 March 2021), which the Republic of Korea has supported as a co-sponsor. We hope that the Decision is adopted at the 26th CSP later this year based on broader support from States Parties, thus strengthening the integrity of the Convention.

Mr. Chairperson,

As we experienced in our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical to continuously implement mandates of the OPCW under the CWC, even in emergency circumstances. In this respect, we commend the Technical Secretariat for its efforts to strengthen logistic and technical capabilities to support the work of OPCW policy-making organs and welcome the proposal by the Federal Republic of Germany to maintain business continuity of the Executive Council in emergency circumstances.

Mr. Chairperson,

Ensuring the universality of the CWC remains one of the utmost priorities since the establishment of the OPCW in 1997. Fully convinced that the universality is critical in ensuring full implementation of the Convention, my delegation urges the four remaining States not party to the Convention to join it as soon as possible without any preconditions. We would like to request that the Technical Secretariat continue its efforts to achieve universality at the earliest possible time.

We are pleased to see substantial progress in the Centre for Chemistry and Technology Project. The new ChemTech Centre will significantly enhance the capabilities of the OPCW to address evolving threats. As the first State Party to have made voluntary contributions to the initiative in 2017, the Republic of Korea will continue to support the project going forward and encourage all States Parties to contribute to this meaningful project.

Mr. Chairperson,

Korea has always been playing an active part in furthering regional cooperation in the fields of chemical safety and security. In this vein, Korea has since 2012 been hosting on an annual basis with the OPCW the Seoul Workshop to help ensure chemical safety and security in the industrial sector in Asia. Though the Workshop was not held in 2020 due to the pandemic situation, the ROK government looks forward to its possible resumption in 2021 and has been communicating closely with the Technical Secretariat. Korea will continue to engage with the Secretariat as well as regional partner States with a view to strengthening regional capabilities and capacities.

Mr. Chairperson,

In closing, I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this Executive Council session and be published on the OPCW website and external server.

Thank you. /END/