

Statement by H.E. Mr. Vidmantas Purlys
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Lithuania to the Organisation for the
Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
Ninety-Seventh Session of the Executive Council
6-9 July 2021

Mr. Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Lithuania aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Sanja Štiglic, Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the OPCW on behalf of the European Union and would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

I congratulate H.E. Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki for his appointment as the new Chairperson of the Executive Council and assure him of my delegation's full support during his tenure. We also continue to lend our full support and confidence in the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, along with the Technical Secretariat, to carry out their important work. We have full confidence in the professionalism and impartiality of the OPCW teams.

As have been stated many times before, impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not be tolerated. We must also take all necessary actions to ensure that the global norm prohibiting the use of chemical weapons is not compromised.

We are deeply concerned that Russia did not disclose the circumstances of the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny who was poisoned in Russia by a military grade chemical nerve agent of the novichok group in August 2020. We also find it striking that Russia no longer considers technical assistance visit by the Technical Secretariat relevant, even though the use of the chemical weapon on the Russian ground has been confirmed by four different and trusted laboratories (Germany, France, Sweden, OPCW).

We condemn such blatant violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and strongly support efforts of bringing those responsible for this heinous attack to justice. We regret that in May 2021 a military court in Moscow has upheld a lower court's decision to reject a lawsuit filed by jailed Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny over refusal to launch a probe into his poisoning. We urge Russia to disclose fully the circumstances of the assassination attempt, which seems to reflect a possible broader scope of similar incidents, without further delay.

More than a year ago it was found that Syria has used chemical weapons in three separate attacks on its territory in 2017. Syria has failed to comply with the Convention and to follow the steps laid by the Executive Council last July. Therefore the Conference of States Parties earlier this year addressed Syria's breaches of international law and suspended a set of rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic. We continue to fight impunity by sending a clear signal that such use of the chemical weapons will not be tolerated.

Meanwhile the second IIT report was issued attributing yet another chemical weapons attack in Syria to the Assad regime. We strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances, and demand cessation of such use.

Lithuania has full trust in the OPCW's leadership and the professional manner in which the Technical Secretariat carries out all missions in Syria. We strongly support the impartial and independent work of DAT, FFM and IIT. We do regret the lack of cooperation from Syria and call on to fully disclose and verifiably destroy its chemical weapons program.

Lithuania continues to support the valuable work of the Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

I would like to mention that it is important that the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology steadily advances with the target of becoming operational by early 2023. It provides good opportunity to expand the OPCW's current programmes to some new important areas, for example, the sea-dumped chemical weapons.

Understanding the importance of the OPCW being implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention, we do support the Business Continuity Initiative that Germany has launched last year, trying to develop consensus among States Parties for allowing the EC to convene remotely in cases where the Council is not in a position to do so in-person.

We ask that this statement be made an official document of the Conference and published on the external server and the public website of the OPCW.

Thank you.