

The 98th 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

5 October 2021, The Hague

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

I would like to begin by conveying my appreciation to Chairperson Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki of the Kingdom of Morocco for his able guidance of the preparatory work of the 98th Session of the Executive Council in an efficient, effective and transparent way. I trust that this session will indeed yield outstanding outcomes under his capable leadership, as did the last session.

My delegation also extends its gratitude to Director-General Fernando Arias and all the staff members of the Technical Secretariat for their tremendous endeavours to fulfill their important missions under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) despite the extraordinary challenges brought by the pandemic.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Republic of Korea reiterates that the use of chemical weapons cannot be tolerated anywhere, anytime, by anyone or under any circumstances. All those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

In this regard, my delegation reaffirms its full support for the valuable work of 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 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 called for by 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.

We also note with concern that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete and that the twenty-fifth round of consultations

between the Syrian Arab Republic and DAT are being delayed. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat to address all outstanding issues and ensure that Syria-related OPCW missions are adequately operational.

Mr. Chairperson,

The use of a nerve agent of a Novichok group in poisoning Mr. Alexei Navalny remains a matter of grave concern for all States Parties while the facts and circumstances are not clearly established even one year after the unacceptable crime. 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, my delegation encourages the Russian Federation, on whose territory the attack took place, to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat to disclose all the circumstances surrounding this use of a chemical weapon transparently and impartially.

Mr. Chairperson,

We commend the work of the Secretariat for the first-ever biennial budget proposal. The Republic of Korea notes that the draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2023 is well structured to successfully implement important mandates under the Convention including verification and inspection work, international cooperation and assistance activities, and capacity-building programmes. My delegation believes that the draft will generate a valuable momentum for the Organization to overcome the negative impacts of COVID-19 and to move forward to better address future challenges. We are ready to support the Proposal.

Mr. Chairperson,

The COVID-19 pandemic for the past two years has demonstrated the clear need to improve preparedness for unforeseen emergencies. We need contingency plans to ensure that the key work of the Council can continue even in the midst of a situation in which the Council cannot convene in-person at the OPCW Headquarters. In this spirit, we support as a co-sponsor the draft decision to convene Executive Council meetings or sessions in extraordinary circumstances. We ask all members of the Council to render their support for this meaningful draft decision.

Mr. Chairperson,

My delegation congratulates on the first pillar placement of the new ChemTech Centre on 23rd October and believes that the launch of the upgraded Centre will contribute to meeting the needs of States Parties and addressing evolving chemical threats in the future. As the first State Party to have made voluntary contributions to the project, the Republic of Korea will continue its support for the project on the path ahead. In shaping a more detailed plan of the Centre, we look forward to close collaboration between the Secretariat and all States Parties to devise effective capacity-building and international cooperation opportunities.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Republic of Korea has always been committed to strengthening regional cooperation in the field 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. My delegation welcomes the 9th Workshop to be held this December online after a year of suspension due to the pandemic. Korea hopes to hold the 10th workshop next year in-person to further strengthening regional capabilities and capacities.

Mr. Chairperson,

Universal adherence to the Convention has been an utmost priority for the Organization since its establishment in 1997. Bearing in mind that universality is truly essential in ensuring full implementation of the Convention, the Republic of Korea urges the four remaining States not party to the Convention to join it as soon as possible without any preconditions. We look forward to the Technical Secretariat also exerting its efforts to achieve universality at the earliest possible time.

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/