

## **The 98th 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.

One of the most important issues at this meeting is the budget and programme of the organisation for the coming two years. This is the first time we will adopt a biannual budget, and I would like to commend both the Technical Secretariat and the two budget facilitators for their hard work and dedication regarding this complicated matter. This organisation needs a reliable budget. Norway remains flexible and committed to contribute to finding a good solution.

Mr. Chair,

Norway continues to vigorously condemn all use of chemical weapons. We demand an end to impunity for all perpetrators of these horrific crimes.

In April this year, the Conference of States Parties decided to suspend voting rights and other privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Decision, which was made in response to the conclusion of the first IIT report regarding the use of chemical weapons by Syrian armed forces in 2017, was both timely and necessary.

So far, Syrian authorities have made no real attempts to comply with the conditions for restoring the suspended rights and privileges. On the contrary, the lack of cooperation by the Syrian side has led to the postponement and cancellation of important visits from, and consultations with, representatives of the Technical Secretariat.

We once again urge the Syrian Arab Republic to comply fully with all its obligations in relation to the CWC and to make sure that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons are held accountable for their actions.

Mr. Chair,

We repeat our deep concern in relation to the use of a Novichok nerve agent against the Russian citizen Alexei Navalny, as confirmed by several independent laboratories. This represents a clear violation of the CWC and international law. We urge the Russian

Federation to finally investigate this matter in the most extensive and transparent way possible.

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. We have full confidence in the impartial and diligent work conducted by the Secretariat, its staff and all the OPCW designated laboratories. We strongly support the reappointment of Director General Arias for another term in office.

I am happy to announce that Norway has made a formal contribution to the new ChemTech Centre that is currently under construction just outside The Hague. The new Center will represent an important milestone in the future work and development of the OPCW. This would not have been possible without the relentless work and commitment of the Director-General.

Mr. Chair,

Norway is satisfied with the decision at the 96th meeting 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 commend both the Technical Secretariat and the Bureau for ensuring that this meeting of the Council can take place in a safe and responsible manner. Norway thanks all the other delegations, both Executive Council members and observers, for their constructive approach and contributions in this regard.

Thank you, Mr Chair