

## **EC-98 Agenda 6g “Addressing the threat from Chemical Weapons Use”**

Mr Chairperson,

I am making this statement on behalf of 45 States Parties; namely Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

It is now more than a year since Mr Alexei Navalny was poisoned with a nerve agent whilst travelling in Russia. The OPCW Technical Secretariat confirmed, following a Technical Assistance Visit to Germany, that Mr Navalny was exposed to a nerve agent from the Novichok group. This is a matter of grave concern.

The OPCW’s technical assistance, as outlined in the Convention, was requested to evaluate scheduled and unscheduled chemicals. Whilst this was extremely valuable in confirming a further use of Novichok, the team was not mandated to answer the pressing questions of who administered the nerve agent, how it was administered, and where it could have come from.

Article VII (seven) of the Convention makes clear that each State Party ‘shall, in accordance with its constitutional processes, adopt the necessary measures to implement its obligations under this Convention’.

Yet, despite repeated requests from large numbers of States Parties to the Convention, the Russian Federation has not yet provided a credible explanation of the incident that took place on its soil. We have no knowledge of any

internal investigations taking place in the Russian Federation. Nor do we know what, if anything, the Russian Federation will do to prevent future uses of chemical weapons on its territory.

Consequently, and in order to try to clarify and resolve these unanswered questions, 45 States Parties from all regional groups will later today submit a series of questions to the Russian Federation, pursuant to Article IX (nine), paragraph 2, of the Convention. Article IX, paragraph 2 allows states to request clarification of any matter relating to the implementation of the Convention and for a response to be provided within 10 days.

The questions will be submitted via the Technical Secretariat with a request that they be circulated to all States Parties. It is essential that Russia sets out in detail the steps taken to investigate and shed light on the use of a chemical weapon on its territory.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, and I request that this statement be made available as an official document of EC-98 and made available on the OPCW website and Catalyst.