

**STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA**  
**DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ASTRID HARZ**  
**PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRIA TO THE OPCW**  
**AT THE 98<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE OPCW EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**  
**(The Hague, 5-8 SEPTEMBER 2021)**

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

Austria is fully aligned with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by the Ambassador of Slovenia, Ms Sanja Štiglic. I would nevertheless like to make a few additional remarks in our national capacity.

The most important issue on the agenda of the Executive Council during its 98<sup>th</sup> session is the adoption of the budget, for the first time for a biennium. Austria has followed the negotiations with great attention and participated constructively and we would like to thank the facilitators, Mr. Matteo Facchinotti and Mr. Jerzy Gierasimiuk, as well as the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their hard work. Through their professionalism and dedication it was possible to address several important matters in a spirit of cooperation and with the common goal of ensuring that the OPCW is able to fulfil its mandate. Austria therefore is in a position to support the draft decision and we call on all members of the Council to do the same.

Austria took note of the reports of the Technical Secretariat concerning the progress in the elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons programme. The reports about the ongoing lack of cooperation by the Syrian Arab Republic are worrisome and we call on Syria to engage with the Technical Secretariat in a timely and effective manner. Neither the refusal to issue visa nor the use of confrontational language during the meetings of the Executive Council will address the many open questions and issues. These issues will only be solved by full cooperation with the OPCW and the Technical Secretariat. Austria therefore continues to support the adoption of decision C-25/DEC.9 on “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” and we repeat our call on the Syrian Arab Republic to fully implement both this decision as well as all its obligations under the Convention.

The assassination attempt on the Russian citizen Alexei Navalny is another shocking use of a military chemical nerve agent of the “Novichok” group that has to be condemned in the strongest terms. Such a use of chemical weapons is absolutely unacceptable. We continue to call on the Russian Federation to ensure an impartial and transparent investigation in cooperation with the OPCW.

Last but not least, the Executive Council also has to take a decision on the recommendation to the Conference of States Parties on the appointment of the next Director-General. Austria would like to thank Director-General Fernando Arias for his hard work and dedication to this organisation, his professionalism during the past years has been impressive. Austria therefore is glad to support Director-General Arias for a second term and the draft decision in this regard.

In closing, please let me repeat our unwavering support for the work of the OPCW and our full confidence in the Technical Secretariat. I would kindly ask you, Mr. Chairperson, to consider this statement as an official document of the 98<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Council and to post it on the OPCW External Server and public website.

I thank you!