



Embassy of Finland
The Hague

Statement by Finland
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Permanent Representative of Finland to the OPCW
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Mr. Chairperson, Mr. Director General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finland would like to thank Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki for his able and effective chairmanship of the Executive Council. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the OPCW Director General Ambassador Fernando Arias and his staff for their continuous determination to ensure the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Finland lends its full support to Director General's efforts to enhance gender mainstreaming and the objective of a more diverse Technical Secretariat. My country fully supports the re-appointment of Ambassador Arias for a second term in office. We would like to reiterate our confidence in the expertise, professionalism, impartiality and independence of the OPCW Technical Secretariat in ensuring the implementation of the Convention.

Finland aligns itself with the statement made by Slovenia on behalf of the European Union. In addition, I wish to highlight a few issues from a national perspective.

The use of chemical weapons in all circumstances, by anyone, anywhere and at any time is reprehensible and constitutes a violation of international law, in some circumstances

even amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity. It not only undermines international peace and security but also the credibility and integrity of the rule-based international system. Addressing the threat arising from chemical weapons use is essential for upholding the Chemical Weapons Convention. We will not tolerate impunity for the use of chemical weapons and we must do our utmost to combat it.

This April, the 25th Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention suspended certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic. The decision follows the failure of the Syrian Arab Republic to respect its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention including the use of chemical weapons investigated and confirmed by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team, Fact Finding Missions, the Investigation and Identification Team as well as the Joint UN-OPCW Investigation Mechanism. The decision sends a strong message against impunity for the use of chemical weapons. We hope that it also provides the Syrian Arab Republic a path to compliance with its obligations under the Convention.

Finland reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of the use of a chemical nerve agent of the “Novichok” group to poison Alexei Navalnyi on the territory of the Russian Federation in August 2020. We regret that the OPCW Technical Assistance Visit to examine the circumstances of the assassination attempt has not taken place. We yet again urge the Russian Federation to disclose and credibly explain the circumstances of this chemical weapons use and to comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Full cooperation with the OPCW is imperative.

Achieving a world permanently free of chemical weapons requires predictable and solid financial resources. The Director General’s proposed programme and budget 2022-23 enables the OPCW to continue to implement its core mandated activities in an effective and efficient manner. In addition to financial resources, the OPCW needs adequate and qualified human resources and expertise. Finland welcomes the ongoing efforts to amend the OPCW Tenure Policy with the goal of finding solutions that would best benefit the organization.

The Covid-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated that in certain specific circumstances it is not possible to organize in-person meetings. However, it is of utmost importance that we will be able to use virtual technology to allow OPCW policy-making organs to continue to fulfil their duties in exceptional circumstances. Finland, therefore, supports the German proposal for an Executive Council decision to allow for convening Executive Council meetings or sessions in extraordinary circumstances.

To conclude, I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the external server and public website.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.