

Statement by H.E. Mr. Vidmantas Purlys
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Lithuania to the Organisation for the
Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
Ninety-Eighth Session of the Executive Council
5-8 October 2021

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

Lithuania aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Sanja Štiglic, Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the OPCW on behalf of the European Union and would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

We continue to lend our full support and confidence in Director-General, Fernando Arias for his able leadership, commitment and hard work. Lithuania favours his re-appointment for a second term in office. We have full confidence in the professionalism and impartiality of the OPCW's Technical Secretariat.

Impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not be tolerated. We have to take all necessary actions to ensure that the global norm of prohibiting the use of chemical weapons is not compromised. Therefore, we remain deeply concerned that Russia did not disclose the circumstances of the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny who was poisoned in Russia by a military grade chemical nerve agent of the "Novichok" group in August 2020. The use of the chemical weapon on the Russian ground has been confirmed by four trusted laboratories (in Germany, France, Sweden and OPCW).

There were many calls on Russia to disclose fully the circumstances of the assassination attempt, but to no avail. Such a blatant violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention must remain firmly on our agenda. Lithuania will continue supporting all the efforts of bringing those responsible for this heinous attack to justice.

The global norm of prohibiting the use of chemical weapons has been compromised also in Syria. The Syrian Arab Air Force used the chemical weapons in three separate attacks on its territory in 2017 and again in 2018. The Conference of States Parties addressed these breaches of international law and suspended certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic. It is a clear signal that the use of chemical weapons will not be tolerated. We strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances, and demand cessation of such use.

Lithuania has full trust in the OPCW's leadership and commend the professional manner in which the Technical Secretariat carries its work in Syria. We strongly support the work of DAT, FFM and IIT. We do regret the lack of cooperation from the Syrian Arab Republic and urge it to provide all the relevant information to the Technical Secretariat.

We have carefully studied the Director-General's proposed programme and budget of the OPCW for 2022-2023. We have concluded that it is both proportionate and reasonable. A slight increase in assessed contributions is inevitable in view of inflation, and taking into account that there is no current cash surplus to be utilised. We call on all Executive Council members to support the draft Decision and recommend its adoption at the next Conference of the States Parties.

We are cosponsoring the Proposal for an Executive Council Decision to Allow for Convening Executive Council Meetings or Sessions in Extraordinary Circumstances launched by Germany last year. It is our strong belief that initiative on Business Continuity is timely and needed. Our work must not be interrupted under any circumstances. We commend the efforts of the German delegation in trying to reach the consensus on the Draft Decision.

We ask that this statement be made an official document of the Conference and published on the external server and the public website of the OPCW.

Thank you.