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SLOVAKIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JURAJ MACHÁČ
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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

The Slovak Republic fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Sanja Štiglic, Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the OPCW, on behalf of the Member States of the European Union and aligned countries. I take this opportunity to make following remarks in my national capacity.

Commencing its new tenure within the Executive Council, the Slovak Republic is pleased to welcome H.E. Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki of Morocco as its Chairperson. We stand ready to assist him to fulfil his mandate and the responsibilities related thereto. Equally, the Slovak Republic appreciates the leading role and tireless effort of Director-General Fernando Arias. Together with Technical Secretariat, they have done their utmost to ensure the promotion of the effective implementation of, and compliance with, the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”) in accordance with principles of maximal professionalism and unquestionable impartiality. Their qualities and approach have proved to be crucial during the extraordinary circumstances that we are still experiencing.

The following issues that the Slovak Republic attaches its most serious concern and importance.

First, the unresolved issue of the assassination attempt and poisoning of Mr Alexei Navalny, political activist of Russian nationality, by the chemical nerve agent called cholinesterase inhibitor on the territory of Russian Federation. His exposure to the agent, belonging to the novichok group, in August 2020 was confirmed beyond any doubt by competent German, French and Swedish authorities and later re-confirmed by the OPCW. Bearing in mind that the mentioned substance has similar structural characteristics as the toxic chemicals already listed in the Annex on Chemicals of the Convention, we find this assassination attempt and poisoning as a flagrant violation of the Convention.

The Slovak Republic felt extraordinarily concerned and therefore supported the introduction of the European Union restrictive measures in October 2020.



We urge the Russian Federation to provide any assistance to the OPCW and mainly to allow the OPCW technical assistance visit (TAV) to be deployed on its territory at any venue that the OPCW Technical Secretariat might deem necessary. Persons engaged in such an unacceptable assassination attempt and poisoning of Mr Alexei Navalny should be held responsible. We also urge the Russian Federation to do its utmost in order to shed light on every single aspect of such a heinous act.

Second, it is the Syrian chemical dossier that continues to preoccupy and still raises serious questions. Therefore, the Slovak Republic voted for the adoption of the decision of Conference of the States Parties suspending certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic that has failed to provide the information requested by the decision of the Executive Council.

We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team, Fact-Finding Mission and Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). The Slovak Republic welcomes the release of the second report of OPCW's IIT that repeatedly confirmed the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian administration.

Further to all information provided by all OPCW missions so far, the Slovak Republic condemns in the strongest possible terms the multiple use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic for many years, which is unacceptable. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to commence to duly honour all of its commitments stemming from the Convention and to provide all assistance and information to OPCW.

Third, the Slovak Republic is pleased to announce its co-sponsorship of the initiative called "Business Continuity" led by Germany. The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly proven that it is more than necessary to adopt a mechanism that will enable the fulfilling of responsibilities of the Executive Council and its Members even in the 'vis maior' circumstances.

Ultimately, the Slovak Republic underscores its fervent and long-term support of the elimination and non-proliferation of chemical weapons and its undisputable political track record therein. Moreover, since our accession to the Convention and joining the OPCW, the Slovak Republic has demonstrated its political endeavour as well as having introduced practical steps in order to enhance the capabilities of the OPCW personnel.

I would kindly ask that this statement be designated as an official document of Ninety-Seventh Session of the Executive Council and posted on the OPCW's public website and the OPCW external server.