

**Statement by H.E. Mrs. Aiga Liepiņa**  
**Permanent Representative of the Republic of Latvia to the Organisation for the**  
**Prohibition of Chemical Weapons**  
**at the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties**  
**29 November – 3 December 2021**

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

Latvia aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

Latvia commends the OPCW Technical Secretariat for implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention objectively, impartially, and independently. We highly regard the leadership of Director General Ambassador Fernando Arias and his devotion in steering the Organisation during these challenging times caused by both the COVID-19 pandemic and the targeted disinformation campaign to discredit and undermine the OPCW and the work of its Technical Secretariat. Latvia is convinced that Ambassador Arias is the most qualified person to ensure implementation of the Convention under these circumstances and therefore strongly supports his re-appointment for a second term in office.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remains one of the most serious concerns for global security. The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances is a violation of international law and can amount to the most serious crimes of international concern, namely war crimes and crimes against humanity. The re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons in the last few years requires the international community to act urgently and collectively in order to safeguard the integrity of the Convention.

Latvia remains deeply concerned that the Russian Federation has not responded to calls by the international community for a thorough and transparent investigation into the

assassination attempt on the Russian opposition politician Mr. Alexei Navalny who was poisoned in Russia by a military chemical nerve agent of the “Novichok” group in August 2020. Latvia has strongly condemned the poisoning which was confirmed by laboratories in Germany, France, Sweden and the OPCW.

We call on the Russian Federation to fully cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation, to disclose the circumstances of this chemical weapons attack in a comprehensive and open manner.

Impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not be tolerated. It is of high importance that those responsible for the assassination attempt on Mr. Navalny must be brought to justice. Latvia will support all efforts in this regard.

Latvia strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force in Ltamenah in March 2017 and in Saraqib in February 2018, as concluded by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team reports. Latvia welcomed the decision by the 25<sup>th</sup> Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention of suspending the voting rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic and considered it an appropriate response by the Conference to the clear violation of the core principles of the Convention by the Syrian Arab Republic.

Regrettably, the Syrian Arab Republic has not demonstrated its willingness to cooperate with the Organization since the adoption of the aforementioned CSP decision in April. On the contrary, we have witnessed steps taken by the Syrian Arab Republic to hinder the work of the Technical Secretariat in carrying out its mandate and in deploying. Syria has not yet declared the full extent of its chemical weapons programme or returned to full compliance of the Convention. Therefore, Latvia urges the Syrian Arab Republic to engage in good faith with the Technical Secretariat, to provide all relevant documents and information in order to update its initial declaration and redress gaps and inconsistencies, and to grant visas for all OPCW personnel in a timely manner, in accordance with its obligations under the Convention and UNSC Resolution 2118.

Latvia is one of co-sponsors of the draft decision “*Understanding regarding the aerosolized use of central nervous system-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes*”. Aerosolized CNS-acting chemicals shall not be used for offensive purposes

by state and non-state actors. We call on all States-Parties to support the decision in order to eliminate the use of CNS-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes.

To conclude, Latvia supports the Director General's proposed budget and programme for 2022-2023 that enables the Technical Secretariat to maintain implementation of important activities and operations.

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

Thank you.