



National Statement delivered by Ambassador Gudrun Lingner
Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to the OPCW

At the 26th session of the Conference of the States Parties

Mr Chairman, Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first congratulate our Chairman, Ambassador Bard Ivar Svendsen of Norway, on his election as Chairperson of this Conference of States Parties. My delegation and I assure you of our full support. Your leadership, together with the constructive cooperation of all delegations, will be essential in reaching the overarching goal of this important gathering: Together, we must ensure that the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is strengthened. We must deliver on our promise that the use of chemical weapons, wherever and by whomever committed, is addressed. We need to enhance accountability and must work together on improving the implementation of the CWC.

Germany strongly believes that we must do justice to the important role of the CWC contributing to global disarmament by providing the necessary resources to its implementing body, the OPCW. We are convinced that the proposed programme and budget for 2022 and 2023 is proportionate and the moderate increase is justified. Germany urges this Conference to adopt the budget proposal as recommended by the 98th Executive Council in October.

Having in mind the indispensable role of the OPCW as an instrument of international peace and security, Germany is particularly grateful to the Organisation's Director General, Fernando Arias. He has been at the helm of the Technical Secretariat for almost 4 years now, and he has steered the OPCW with a steady, reliable and very able hand during extremely challenging times. Germany lends full support to the appointment of Ambassador Arias for a second term in office.

With the objective of strengthening the Convention and clarifying what currently constitutes a grey zone in its implementation, Germany is a co-sponsor of the CSP decision on the aerosolized use of central nervous system-acting chemicals. We call upon all States Parties to support this decision and so contribute to preventing the use of aerosolized CNS-acting chemicals for offensive purposes by state and non-state actors.

Mr. Chairman,

The challenges to the CWC and its implementing body will not diminish in the years to come, on the contrary. Since 2014, we have witnessed an increase regarding the use of chemical weapons, undermining the CWC and seriously eroding international norms. The OPCW must rise to the challenge of a new era of chemical weapons threats.

The new Center for Chemistry and Technology (CCT) will be a cornerstone in this endeavour. Germany notes with satisfaction that construction work has started and that the CCT is well on track for completion by the end of 2022. The German Government has contributed to the construction budget for this new Centre, as have over 50 States Parties from all regional groups. We are determined as well to support the future programmes that will be implemented at the CCT. This is why Germany has decided to make the additional voluntary contribution of 1 Million Euro for strengthening capacity-building efforts. Through this contribution, Germany will enhance capacity-building programmes for African laboratories, thereby adding to our overall support of the Africa programme. In this context, Germany also welcomes the lab-twinning project recently started with the Algerian National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology of the National Gendarmerie, which is a very promising partnership. The second part of the planned additional German contribution shall enable CCT training programmes that will increase OPCW staff's capacity for non-routine missions. Germany is convinced that whenever a chemical weapons' use occurs, those who were the perpetrators, organisers, sponsors or otherwise involved should be identified, and the Secretariat's ability of conducting independent investigations as foreseen in the June 2018 decision of the 4th Special Conference should facilitate universal attribution of all chemical weapons attacks.

Mr. Chairman,

Once the chemical weapons crisis emerged in Syria, the OPCW was forced to tackle the issue and make a historic transformation. In order to address the repeated use of chemical weapons against Syrian civilians, States Parties have established several special OPCW missions. It is important to remember that all of these Syria missions were created in accordance with the CWC, international law and as prescribed by Security Council resolutions. Another important characteristic of all OPCW Syria missions is that their success inherently depends on Syria's cooperation.

In the past years, the Fact Finding Mission has verified a great number of chemical weapons attacks, and many of them occurred after Syria joined the CWC. The Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) has identified, after thorough investigations, the Syrian Air Force as responsible for 4 chemical weapons attacks in 2017 and 2018. Moreover, for more than eight years now, the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team has tried to help Syria to accurately and fully declare all chemical weapons programmes. However, after many years of active engagement, after 24 rounds of DAT consultations in Damascus, we are still far from having a comprehensive Syrian initial declaration in accordance with the CWC. That is why States Parties have adopted in April 2021 the historic decision "Addressing the Possession and use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" (C-25/DEC/CRP.10), suspending Syria's rights and privileges in the OPCW and urging Damascus to comply with the Convention.

But instead of improving, cooperation between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic has become even more difficult in the past months. Germany is deeply concerned by the apparent Syrian refusal to cooperate as reflected in the latest OPCW reports on its Syria missions. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to respect its obligations under international law by providing immediate and unfettered access for all members of all OPCW missions in Syria. Damascus must provide the relevant information to the OPCW and resolve all pending issues with regard to the Syrian initial declaration.

Germany will continue to support global efforts to ensure accountability for perpetrators of chemical weapons' attacks, be it in Syria or elsewhere. The international community must demonstrate that those responsible for chemical weapons' attacks cannot act with impunity. Those countries that shield and support the Assad regime bear a particular responsibility in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

For the same reason we reiterate our call upon the Russian Federation to investigate in full transparency the assassination attempt on the Russian opposition leader Mr. Alexei Navalny who was poisoned on Russian territory by a chemical nerve agent of the "Novichok" group in August 2020. Mr. Navalny's poisoning has been confirmed beyond doubt by two independent OPCW laboratories as well as by specialised laboratories in Germany, France and Sweden. The European Union, including Germany, and an increasing number of States Parties in the framework of the OPCW, have condemned the use of a chemical weapon against Mr. Navalny in the strongest possible terms. They have called on the Russian Federation to fully cooperate with the OPCW in order to explain the circumstances under which he became the victim of a chemical weapons attack.

On 5 October 2021, 45 States Parties across regional groups asked the Russian Federation factual questions on this matter, under Art. IX.2. of the Convention. These questions require the Russian Federation *inter alia* to explain the circumstances of the poisoning and what measures have been taken in order to prevent such an attack from happening again on Russian territory. As of today, Moscow did not provide any substantial answers to these questions. Instead, numerous accusations against different States Parties, including Germany, were made and far-fetched conspiracy theories were presented to the international community. Germany deeply regrets this and rejects the baseless accusations. Together with the 45 States Parties, we will continue to request answers from the Russian Federation in accordance with the Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

Germany is deeply concerned to hear that some States Parties block the attendance of distinguished civil society organisations to this Conference. This is especially disturbing, as the 2013 Review Conference agreed to open the Conference to civil society groups and agreed guidelines on their attendance. These guidelines must be respected. Among the NGOs that have been denied attendance to this Conference is the renowned Berlin-based think tank "Global

Public Policy Institute” (GPPi). GPPi has conducted a number of extremely valuable studies on the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian conflict. Germany is particularly pleased that we are able to present some aspects of GPPi’s work in a side-event to the 26th CSP organized in cooperation with the Canadian delegation.

Mr. Chairman,

One of the lessons learnt from the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of the CWC is that we need to adapt our working methods in order to be prepared for circumstances that prevent us from convening in-person meetings of the Executive Council. After in depth consultations with all States Parties, Germany, together with a group of co-sponsors and supporters from all regional groups, has proposed a draft decision for consideration by the Executive Council, aiming at allowing the use of virtual meeting technology in very specific circumstances. This draft decision has found broad support across regional groups and will be further discussed in 2022.

Let me end by stressing that Germany remains strongly committed to the global fight against chemical weapons. As a dedicated State Party to the Convention, we will continue to support the OPCW in words and in deeds, thereby striving to achieve the OPCW’s goal of a world permanently free of chemical weapons. In 2022, Germany will take over the presidency of the “Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction”. This Global Partnership unites 30 member countries and the EU and has made, since its creation in 2002, very important contributions to strengthening the CWC. Germany will spare no effort to enhance global chemical security also in the framework of the Global Partnership Presidency. Fighting the re-emergence of chemical weapons remains a pivotal security interest of all civilised nations.

Thank you.

We kindly request that this statement be designated an official document of this Conference session and posted on both the external server and the public website.