



REGERINGSKANSLIET

Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden

Statement by Sweden
Twenty-sixth Conference of the States Parties
of the Chemical Weapons Convention

H.E. Mr. Johannes Oljelund

29 November 2021

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Director-General,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by welcoming you, Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway, as Chairperson of the 26th Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. I can assure you of the full support of my delegation in this endeavour. Let me also thank Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki of Morocco for his tireless efforts in the preparations for this session as Chairperson of the Executive Council.

Furthermore, I seize this opportunity to thank you, Director-General Fernando Arias, for your statement, which provides valuable guidance in our work at this Conference of the States Parties. It is due to the diligent commitment of the Director-General and the staff of the OPCW that the missions of this Organisation are carried out in such an exemplary manner. Sweden commends the hard work you do and reiterates its support for the Organisation as a whole.

Sweden fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and I wish to add a few remarks on behalf of my country.

Just like at the last Conference of States Parties, we meet against the backdrop of the pandemic and a deteriorating international security environment. Despite difficulties, we are joining together to meet common challenges and work to strengthen international peace and security, and a world free of chemical weapons.

The recurring use of chemical weapons sends a clear signal: the OPCW's role within the disarmament and non-proliferation framework remains crucial. The OPCW deserves the full

support of all States Parties to the Convention – politically, technically and financially – in its efforts to uphold the global norm against chemical weapons.

Once again, Sweden calls on the Syrian Arab Republic to comply with its international obligations and to fully cooperate with the OPCW. We note with apprehension that the Syrian Arab Republic remains in breach of its commitments as a States Party of the Convention. Instead of taking steps to redress the situation, the Syrian Arab Republic keeps obstructing OPCW's efforts to investigate and establish accountability for chemical weapons use on its territory. Recently by not approving visas for all members of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). Requests to Syria to rightly declare its chemical weapons and chemical weapons facilities as well as to resolve outstanding issues in regard to its initial declaration all remain unanswered.

For each and every States Party to the Convention it must be a priority that the responsible perpetrators of chemical weapons use are identified and held accountable. Impunity is not an option. Therefore, Sweden fully supports the important work of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) on identifying the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

The Fact Finding Mission, the DAT and the IIT all play an equally important role in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention, of UN Security Council Resolution 2118 and related decisions of the OPCW. The expertise, integrity and professionalism of these units should never be questioned by any States Party for political gains.

To emphasize the significance of the continued work of the OPCW in the Syrian Arab Republic, Sweden has contributed with two million Swedish Kronor for 2021 to the OPCW Trust Fund for Syria Missions.

During 2021, Sweden also supported the OPCW by providing advanced technical training for OPCW inspectors at the designated facilities of the Swedish Defence Research Agency.

Sweden condemns in the strongest terms the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny, who was poisoned with a military chemical nerve agent of the “novichok” group.

We once again call on the Russian Government to do its utmost to disclose the circumstances of this crime and bring those responsible to justice. Russian authorities should have all necessary information at their disposal to investigate events that took place on Russian soil, and to share with other States Parties what actions have been taken to address this crime. Sweden together with 44 other States asked the Russian Federation what actions it had taken to address the assassination attempt of Navalny. Under the Chemical Weapons Convention the Russian Federation is obliged to provide such a clarification – yet – we have not received answers to the specific questions that were posed by 45 States.

Sweden welcomes the decision of the Executive Council to recommend the proposed Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2022-2023 to this Conference. On behalf of my country, I would like to thank the Technical Secretariat as well as the co-facilitators for their dedicated work and urge all States Parties to support the proposed budget.

Mindful of the continued financial constraints, we also urge all States Parties that are in arrears of payment of their annual contribution, to pay their share in full and with no further delay. By not respecting their financial obligation, these States Parties are putting the fundamental purposes and tasks of the Organisation at risk.

It is Sweden's conviction that a gender equality perspective on all aspects of our collective work will strengthen international peace and security. We appreciate the efforts made by the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat on enhancing gender and geographical representation among staff. The recent gender audit was a positive step to help the organisation to identify areas where further work is needed. Sweden is keen to hear of its outcome, and how the results will be followed up.

Sweden is one of many countries concerned with the risk of the toxic and potentially lethal chemicals that target the central nervous system, and their potential use for hostile purposes. It is crucial to clarify that the use of these chemicals for law enforcement purposes is prohibited under the Convention. We encourage all States Parties to vote in favour of the draft decision on aerosolized use of central nervous system-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes.

Lastly, Sweden welcomes the participation of representatives from the civil society at this 26th session of the Conference, and regrets that not all that applied were allowed to participate. NGOs play a key role in our common strive towards a world free from chemical weapons. It is vital that the OPCW remains true to its fundamental values of openness and transparency.

I thank you Mr. Chairperson and ask that this statement be issued a public document of the Conference and published on the OPCW external website.