

The 26th Session of the Conference of the States Parties
General Debate
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Yeondoo Jeong
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the OPCW

19 November 2021, The Hague

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

First of all, I would like to sincerely congratulate Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway on assuming the chairpersonship of the 26th Session of the Conference of the States Parties. The Korean delegation has every confidence that this session of the Conference will prove very fruitful with the benefit of his able leadership. Our gratitude goes also to the outgoing chairperson, Ambassador Jose Antonio Zabalgaitia Trejo of Mexico, for his devotion and heartfelt endeavors in fulfilling his mission over the past year.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation as well to Director-General Fernando Arias and all the staff of the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for their tireless efforts to implement the key mandates under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We deeply appreciate your devotion even in the midst of the on-going global pandemic.

Mr. Chairperson,

The achievements are tremendous - including the destruction of more than 98 percent of chemical weapons declared since the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. With the repeated use of chemical weapons around the globe, however, our vision of a world free of chemical weapons and of the threat of their use are yet to be fully achieved. The Republic of Korea underscores that the use of chemical weapons cannot be tolerated anywhere, anytime, by anyone or under any circumstances. All those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

In this spirit, the Korean Government reaffirms its unwavering support for the Syria-related OPCW mechanisms including the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). We commend the

outstanding efforts by the Technical Secretariat to investigate relevant incidents in a transparent, independent, impartial, and professional way.

My delegation expresses its grave concern over the report by the Technical Secretariat that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete and over the findings of the two IIT reports that there are reasonable grounds to believe that Syria used chemical weapons. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic, as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, to immediately take necessary actions to redress the situation and come into compliance with the Convention, as called for by the Conference of the States Parties (CSP) Decision C-25/DEC.9 (21 April 2021) supported by the Republic of Korea as a co-sponsor.

It is also regrettable that cooperation between Syria and the Technical Secretariat has proved more difficult and this has a negative impact on relevant OPCW activities. We strongly urge Syria to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat to address all outstanding issues and ensure that Syria-related OPCW missions operate in an effective and timely manner.

Mr. Chairperson,

The use of a nerve agent of a Novichok group in poisoning Mr. Alexei Navalny in August 2020, which was confirmed by the OPCW, is an ongoing serious concern for all States Parties which hampers our efforts to achieve a world free of chemical weapons. The Republic of Korea opposes, in the strongest possible terms, any use of chemical weapons and emphasizes once again that all those responsible for chemical weapons use must be held accountable for their inexcusable crimes.

In this regard, we encourage the Russian Federation, on whose territory the attack took place, to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat to disclose all the circumstances surrounding this use of a chemical weapon in a transparent and impartial manner.

Mr. Chairperson,

As threats emanating from developments in the field of chemistry are steadily evolving, States Parties should engage in utmost efforts to uphold the international norm against the re-emergence of chemical weapons including new types of potential chemical weapons agents. My delegation is particularly concerned that central nervous system (CNS)-acting chemicals could potentially be used as chemical weapons under the guise of law enforcement activities. It is against this backdrop that Korea co-sponsored the draft decision on Understanding

Regarding the Aerosolised Use of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes.

We are of the view that the draft decision on the table does not create any new obligations for States Parties and intends to identify our common understanding that using CNS-acting chemicals in aerosolised form, which is likely to result in permanent harm or death, is inconsistent with law enforcement purposes as a purpose not prohibited under the Convention. My delegation reiterates its full support for this draft decision and asks all States Parties to join in rendering their support for this meaningful step.

Mr. Chairperson,

Korea believes that the draft of the first-ever Biennial Programme and Budget 2022-23 is proportionate and well organized for the OPCW to successfully implement vital work in accordance with the Convention. We support the draft proposal submitted to the Conference and encourage all States Parties to pay their full assessed contributions in a timely manner, which is imperative to ensure that the Organisation is fully equipped with optimal resources. Likewise, we expect the Organisation will use the contributions most effectively and efficiently in delivering its duties.

Mr. Chairperson,

Upgrading the current OPCW laboratory into a new Centre for Chemistry and Technology will be key in enhancing the capacity of the Organisation to meet various needs of States Parties and in addressing evolving threats in the future. As the first State Party to have made voluntary contributions to the initiative in 2017, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its continued commitment to support the project and it is pleased to pledge additional funding of 110,000 euros to this end. We look forward to the successful establishment of the ChemTech Centre as scheduled.

Mr. Chairperson,

Korea has consistently played a full part in deepening cooperation at the regional level in the fields of chemical safety and security. In this spirit, Korea has since 2012 been hosting with the OPCW the Seoul Workshop with a view to serving to strengthen chemical safety and security in the industrial sector in Asia. My delegation welcomes the 9th Workshop to be held on-line on 13th this December after a year of suspension due to the pandemic. We gladly invite interested States Parties to attend this meaningful occasion. We hope to hold the 10th

Workshop next year possibly in-person providing a valuable opportunity to share knowledge and best practices in the chemical field.

Mr. Chairperson,

Universal adherence to the Convention remains a top priority for the Organization since its establishment in 1997. Convinced that universality is critical in ensuring full implementation of the Convention, the Republic of Korea urges the four remaining States not a party to the Convention to join it as soon as possible without any preconditions. We look forward to the Technical Secretariat also continuing its efforts to achieve universality at the earliest possible time.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Republic of Korea fully supports and welcomes Director-General Fernando Arias serving a second term. During his first term, Director-General Arias has indeed demonstrated very capable leadership. He has shown great devotion in terms of fulfilling the important mandates under the Convention, even in the midst the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. My delegation believes that the renewal of the Director-General's mandate will be essential in the successful implementation of the on-going work of the Secretariat and in further enhancing the overall capacity of the Organization.

Mr. Chairperson,

In closing, I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session of the Conference of the States Parties and be published on the OPCW website and external server.

Thank you. /END/