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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JOSEPH MANZO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES
UNDER AGENDA ITEM 9(D)**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

In just over a week, we will mark the twenty-fourth anniversary of entry-into-force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”). An achievement that should be celebrated as a significant milestone for international security, non-proliferation and disarmament, and a reaffirmation to the goal of preserving the global norm against the use of chemical weapons. For over two decades, this Organisation and its States Parties have committed to the global endeavour to permanently and verifiably eliminate chemical weapons; and to exclude completely the possibility of the use of such weapons. The United States can still say with confidence that the Convention remains one of the most successful disarmament treaties to ever dare to eliminate an entire class of weapons of mass destruction.

The Convention, however, remains under assault by those who seek to undermine its purpose, and ignore its provisions. Even today—nearly twenty-four years later—we find ourselves still condemning the use of chemical weapons under a sub-item that tragically will continue to appear on our agenda as long as a small handful of countries continue to carry out chemical weapons attacks. This body cannot remain silent. There must be consequences for those using these abhorrent weapons; and there can never be impunity for such disregard for the rule of law. We must take action to hold those who continue to use chemical weapons accountable.

Just last month, on March 4, we recalled the third anniversary of the chemical weapons attack in Salisbury, when Russian security services used a novichok nerve agent in the United Kingdom against a citizen of the United Kingdom, Mr Sergei Skripal, and his Russian citizen daughter, Yulia Skripal. Despite the outrage for such a blatant and intolerable act, we are forced to acknowledge yet another egregious Russian attack using a novichok nerve agent meant to assassinate Mr Aleksey Navalny on Russian territory last August. As an opposition figure, Mr Navalny was subject to continuous FSB surveillance and was targeted like other internal opponents of the Kremlin.



While Russia continues to cite its conspiracy theories and chooses to distort the facts, the United States has assessed that Russia used a chemical weapon in the attempted assassination of Mr Navalny in Russia, just as it did in the attempted assassination of Mr Skripal. Russia's Federal Security Services poisoned Navalny with a nerve agent of the novichok group while he was campaigning for opposition candidates in Tomsk, Russia. The now-detailed understanding of how Russian security agents tracked and attempted to kill Mr Navalny—provided through a robust body of publicly available evidence that has been read and viewed by millions of people around the world—lays bare the absurdity of Russia's disinformation campaign which clearly seeks to deflect attention from the serious questions before the Russian government. Furthermore, the Kremlin is attempting to use the platform of a respected multilateral institution to attempt to add legitimacy to its false claims.

Russia has done nothing to address the confirmed use of a chemical weapon within its territory. In fact, it has withdrawn its request for a technical assistance visit (TAV), while at the same time, refusing to conduct a thorough and transparent investigation of its own.

Mr Chairperson let us be clear: the use of chemical weapons, anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances, is entirely unacceptable. The United States once again calls on Russia to join the responsible nations of the world and comply with its international obligations. Russia must fully declare and eliminate its chemical weapons program or be held to account.

To that end, the United States of America and our partners in the United Kingdom and the European Union took action against the Russian Federation on 2 March 2021 for its use of a chemical weapon against Mr Navalny and for his arrest and imprisonment by the Russian Federation. This includes the imposition of sanctions and other measures on Russia to send a clear signal that the use of chemical weapons has severe consequences.

This body must demonstrate a resolute response to such acts if we truly aspire to relegate these inhumane weapons of war to the annals of history. We must stand committed to the goals embodied in the preamble of the Convention. We must do our part to prevent the normalisation of chemical weapons use and its re-emergence as a serious threat to our collective security. We must uphold the norm against chemical weapons use and – bring chemical weapons use to zero for the sake of our collective peace and security.

I ask that this statement be designated an official document of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and posted on both the external server and the public website.