



**SPAIN**

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE KINGDOM OF SPAIN TO THE  
OPCW AT THE NINETY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

Spain aligns itself with the statement of the European Union published on the occasion of the Ninety-Seventh Session of the Executive Council.

First and foremost, my delegation would like to express its gratitude for the effective work of the new Chairperson of the Council, Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki, who has accepted this post in the challenging conditions posed by the pandemic. We would also like to express our profound gratitude for the outgoing Council Chairperson, Ambassador Agustín Vázquez Gómez. He effectively carried out his duties during previous Council sessions, at which reports were approved and agreements were made to overcome differences within the Organisation.

Since joining the Executive Council over one year ago in May 2020, Spain has worked loyally with its partners in the European Union with two main objectives, namely: the fulfilment of its obligations under the Convention, and providing support for both the Director-General, Mr Fernando Arias, and the Technical Secretariat, to ensure that they are able to implement the mandate that the 193 members of the OPCW have entrusted to them, which can be summarised in just one phrase: a world completely free of chemical weapons.

Following the inclusion of novichok-family agents in the Annex on Chemicals, many countries believed that cases such as the unacceptable attack in Salisbury three years ago would have remained definitively in the past and never be repeated. Unfortunately, our hopes did not become a reality, as demonstrated by the poisoning of Mr Navalny.

In these past seven months, the situation has not only not improved—it has actually worsened. The three facts that we mentioned in our national statement at the Ninety-Fifth Session of the Council still require clarification: that the chemical agent that was used is from the novichok family, that the victim is a Russian national, and that the attack took place within the territory of the Russian Federation.

These facts cannot and should not be ignored. For this reason, the Government of the Russian Federation has the unavoidable responsibility of an honest, exhaustive, and transparent investigation into the matter.

My delegation previously lamented the fact that the Government of the Russian Federation withdrew its request for the technical assistance of the OPCW Technical Secretariat to cooperate in an investigation into this matter. Spain, consequently, once again requests that the



Russian Federation cooperate closely with the Technical Secretariat and conduct an in-depth investigation in which all the necessary human and technical resources are used and then share the information that is obtained with the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the countries that are signatories to the Convention.

After carefully studying and considering the text, a few months ago Spain decided to co-sponsor the draft decision presented by the delegation of the United States, which aims to include the use of aerosolised central nervous system-acting chemicals as riot control agents in the Annex on Chemicals.

This decision was adopted at the last Executive Council, but has not yet been submitted for adoption by the Conference of the States Parties. Spain, as a co-sponsor, reiterates its support for this initiative and understands that this is a step forward on the path towards the complete eradication of potentially lethal chemical agents that might be used against people and, of course, with the exception that my country does not oppose the use of these chemicals for medical, pharmaceutical, and agricultural purposes.

Spain wishes to express its hope that this initiative will be submitted as soon as possible to the Conference of the States Parties for its ultimate adoption.

My delegation welcomes the fact that Syria's repeated violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention have finally met a forceful response from the international community. Effectively, the decision of the Conference of the States Parties approved this past April has suspended the Syrian Arab Republic's rights within the OPCW, marking a fundamental milestone for the Organisation and signalling the path to follow in the future with Member States that contradict the provisions of the Convention.

Regrettably, the situation has not changed much, in spite of the decision adopted by the Conference. Spain reiterates its concern surrounding the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. We continue to note little to no cooperation on the part of the Government of Damascus with the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation in terms of everything related to the declaration and inspection of its chemical arsenal.

This attitude of the Syrian Government was observed yet again during the last briefing on 30 June on the activities and tasks of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). According to the documentation presented by the DAT, the Syrian authorities refuse to cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat and are putting themselves in a situation of permanent violation of the Convention, which should continue to be worthy of the attention and condemnation of the international community.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria constitutes a threat to the international community, which is why the obstacles that are hindering the investigation are unacceptable. Spain supports the Technical Secretariat and the Director-General in all the efforts aimed at reaching full compliance with the Convention by the Syrian authorities, with the ultimate objective of eliminating any trace of chemical weapons in that country.

Aside from the lack of cooperation of the authorities of Damascus with the Technical Secretariat on the declaration and investigation, we should not forget the work of the Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team in the Syrian Arab Republic. As became clear following the decision adopted at the Ninety-Fourth Session of the Executive Council in July 2020, Syria must respond to the attacks carried out by its Air Force in Ltamenah and Saraqib. My delegation regrets the lack of explanations from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic on this issue.

The OPCW's abilities to meet the challenges posed by advances in science and technology, or the risks associated with the terrorist use of chemical agents, depends on the maintenance and improvement of OPCW's capacities in terms of human and material resources. For this reason, support for projects such as the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology are of special importance, as they will contribute to ensuring that the OPCW is in a better condition to meet its commitments and able to support the Member States if needed.

Likewise, Spain highly values the efforts of the Organisation to provide more modern and effective cybersecurity mechanisms, which are needed in light of the recent data attacks suffered by the Technical Secretariat originating in foreign countries.

Finally, Mr Chairperson, Spain wishes to reiterate its support and express its full confidence in the work being carried out by the Technical Secretariat, the IIT Coordinator, Ambassador Oñate, and the Director-General, Mr Fernando Arias. We congratulate all of them on their work and we urge them to continue on this path in future.

My delegation requests that this national statement be considered an official document of the Ninety-Seventh Session of the Executive Council and included on the Organisation's extranet and website.

Thank you.

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