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**FINLAND**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PÄIVI KAUKORANTA  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FINLAND TO THE OPCW  
AT THE NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,  
Director-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Finland wishes to thank H.E. Ambassador Agustín Vázquez Gómez for his outstanding commitment and valuable contribution during his tenure as the Chairperson of the Executive Council. I would also like to thank the OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias and his staff for their determination and efforts to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”). Let me reiterate my country’s strong support to the OPCW Technical Secretariat. Finland has full confidence in the expertise, professionalism, impartiality, and independence of the Technical Secretariat.

Finland aligns itself with the statement made by Portugal on behalf of the European Union. In addition, I wish to highlight a few issues from a national perspective.

The use of chemical weapons in all circumstances, by anyone, anywhere and at any time is a violation of international law, a threat to international peace and security, and it seriously undermines principles of the rule-based international system. It is also an abhorrent and heinous act with indiscriminate human consequences and may amount to the most serious crimes – war crimes and crimes against humanity.

We strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force as concluded by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) in April 2020. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic must be held accountable. IIT—with its findings and conclusions—plays an important role in the fight against impunity and it is a key element in ensuring accountability. We look forward to the release of the next IIT report. We are concerned about the continuing inconsistencies in the Syrian Arab Republic’s initial declaration and undeclared facilities, as described by the latest Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) report released last November. The draft decision “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (C-25/DEC/CRP.10) from November 2020 is a proper measure for the Conference of the States Parties to take to respond to the clear violation of the Convention.



Alexei Navalny's poisoning by a chemical nerve agent of the novichok group was confirmed by specialised laboratories in Germany, France and Sweden, as well as by the OPCW. We call on the Russian Federation to undertake full, impartial, and transparent investigation of the assassination attempt in accordance with the obligations defined in Article VII of the Convention, which urges all States Parties to not permit in any place under its control any activity prohibited by the Convention. We were disconcerted that the technical assistance visit originally requested by Russia and for which the OPCW Technical Secretariat demonstrated willingness and readiness to undertake, did not materialise due to the withdrawal of the request by the Russian Federation.

Mr Chairperson, Finland supports the draft decision "Understanding Regarding the Aerosolized Use of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes" presented by Australia, Switzerland and the United States of America. Given the risks involved, we find it important to make clear that the use of these chemicals for law enforcement purposes is prohibited under the Convention. We invite States Parties to extend their support for the decision.

We would like to express our appreciation and strong support for the Director-General's efforts to improve gender balance at the Technical Secretariat. We encourage further efforts to ensure an inclusive working environment that embraces equality. We look forward to hearing the findings and recommendations of the on-going gender audit of the Technical Secretariat.

To conclude, I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council and posted on the external server and the public website.

Thank you.

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