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**FINLAND**

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

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

Finland would like to thank Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki for his able and effective chairmanship of the Executive Council (“the Council”). I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias and his staff for their continuous determination to ensure the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”). Finland lends its full support to the Director-General’s efforts to enhance gender mainstreaming and the objective of a more diverse Technical Secretariat. My country fully supports the reappointment of Ambassador Arias for a second term in office. We would like to reiterate our confidence in the expertise, professionalism, impartiality, and independence of the OPCW Technical Secretariat in ensuring the implementation of the Convention.

Finland aligns itself with the statement made by Slovenia 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 reprehensible and constitutes a violation of international law, in some circumstances even amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity. It not only undermines international peace and security, but also the credibility and integrity of the rule-based international system. Addressing the threat arising from chemical weapons use is essential for upholding the Convention. We will not tolerate impunity for the use of chemical weapons, and we must do our utmost to combat it.

This April, the Twenty-Fifth Conference of the States Parties to the Convention suspended certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic. The decision follows the failure of the Syrian Arab Republic to respect its obligations under the Convention including the use of chemical weapons investigated and confirmed by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team, the Fact-Finding Mission, the Investigation and Identification Team, as well as the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigation Mechanism. The decision sends a strong message against impunity for the use of chemical weapons. We hope that it also provides the Syrian Arab Republic with a path to compliance with its obligations under the Convention.



Finland reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of the use of a chemical nerve agent of the novichok group to poison Alexei Navalny on the territory of the Russian Federation in August 2020. We regret that the OPCW technical assistance visit to examine the circumstances of the assassination attempt has not taken place. We yet again urge the Russian Federation to disclose and credibly explain the circumstances of this chemical weapons use and to comply with its obligations under the Convention. Full cooperation with the OPCW is imperative.

Achieving a world permanently free of chemical weapons requires predictable and solid financial resources. The Director-General's proposed Programme and Budget for 2022–2023 enables the OPCW to continue to implement its core mandated activities in an effective and efficient manner. In addition to financial resources, the OPCW needs adequate and qualified human resources and expertise. Finland welcomes the ongoing efforts to amend the OPCW tenure policy with the goal of finding solutions that would best benefit the Organisation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated that in certain specific circumstances it is not possible to organise in-person meetings. However, it is of the utmost importance that we will be able to use virtual technology to allow OPCW policy-making organs to continue to fulfil their duties in exceptional circumstances. Finland, therefore, supports the German proposal for a Council decision to allow for convening Council meetings or sessions in extraordinary circumstances.

To conclude, I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the external server and public website.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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