



OPCW

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SPAIN

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

Mr Chairperson,

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

My delegation would like to thank the Chairperson of the Executive Council, Mr Abdelouahab Bellouki, for the work he has demonstrated in leading the discussion and statements of the Council under exceptional conditions.

Spain has continued to work loyally with its European Union partners in the efforts of the Organisation, and has set out two main objectives: the implementation of all of the obligations set out in the Convention, and the provision of support for the Technical Secretariat and the Director-General towards carrying out the mandate assigned to them by the 193 members of the Organisation, which can be summed up in just one phrase: a world completely free of chemical weapons.

At this time, the Organisation is facing a variety of delicate matters that are worthy of our full attention.

First of all, the implementation of the Convention by the Syrian Arab Republic. Since 2013, Syria has been non-compliant with the obligations set out in the Convention in three different ways. The declaration, as it did not accurately report to this Organisation or to the United Nations regarding the chemical stockpiles that it possesses or the production facilities located on Syrian territory. Neither has it met the obligation to clearly and transparently report on all accidents, incidents, and attacks perpetrated on its territory involving chemical weapons. And finally, it has not held the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic to justice, neither at the domestic nor the international level.

As recently as last 30 September, the Technical Secretariat offered a new informative session on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. Over the course of this session, there remained yet another point of absolute non-compliance on the part of the Government of Damascus with the Convention—to which it acceded voluntarily. Not only does the Syrian Arab Republic continue evading the three most fundamental obligations that affect it, but it goes even further, as it is systematically hindering the work of the Technical Secretariat on Syrian territory; furthermore, it has come to light that the Syrian regime is proceeding with either concealing or destroying components used in attacks involving chemical weapons that are under the custody of the OPCW on Syrian territory.



This situation cannot be tolerated. The use of chemical weapons anywhere, for any reason, and against anyone is unacceptable from the standpoint of international law. For this reason, the Syrian Arab Republic has been sanctioned via the withdrawal of its rights at the heart of the Organisation, and my delegation hopes that these sanctions will be upheld for as long as is necessary until the Damascus regime meets compliance with the obligations that it once freely assumed. At the same time, Spain would like to see the United Nations Security Council maintain vigilance and continuous control over the activities of the Syrian regime with regard to chemical weapons and to promptly draw conclusions in order to act accordingly.

Spain continues to note with concern the matter involving Mr Alexei Navalny; that is to say, a poisoning with a substance prohibited by the Convention that took place on the territory of the Russian Federation.

More than one year has passed since this incident took place, and in spite of the Organisation's efforts to clarify the matter, the fact is that we are still basically where we began.

The incident took place against a Russian citizen within the territory of the Russian Federation and, as such, it is up to its authorities to investigate what happened in depth and to facilitate the work of the OPCW in order to clarify the incident.

For this reason, Spain has decided to co-sponsor the initiative presented by a number of Member States for the implementation of Article IX of the Convention, which, among other things, makes it possible for one or several States Parties to address another State Party to clarify any issue related to the implementation of the Convention.

Along these lines, Spain urges and calls upon the Russian Federation to sincerely cooperate with the Technical Secretariat and ultimately with the Member States in the investigation into the incident involving Mr Navalny. In this regard, it would be more than desirable for the Russian Federation to resubmit its request for technical assistance within the framework of the Convention, which it had previously submitted to the Technical Secretariat for an investigation into this matter.

The ability of the OPCW to confront the challenges posed by advances in science and technology, or the risks stemming from the use of State or non-State actors of chemical weapons, depends on the maintenance and improvement of the OPCW's capacities in both human and material terms. For this reason, my delegation welcomes the fact that just a few days ago, it was finally possible to hold the groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology. This Centre will not only serve the objective of investigations, but it will also be able to dedicate efforts to training expert personnel of member countries, especially those with lower to middle income. For this reason, Spain firmly supports this initiative.

Likewise, Spain highly values the efforts of the Organisation to provide cybersecurity that is more modern, more effective, and better suited to current circumstances in light of the recent attacks suffered by the Technical Secretariat launched from foreign countries.

Spain wishes to underscore the work of the Organisation to incorporate a gender-based perspective in its work, such as the gender and diversity audit carried out this past spring. We hope to soon learn the results and we trust that it will contribute to continued improvements in the level of awareness and sensitivity on this issue.

At the next Conference of the States Parties in November and December, Spain will strongly support the confirmation of the Director-General for a new four-year term. We thank Fernando Arias for his excellent disposition and goodwill to continue on this post for a second term.

Spain would also like to reiterate its support and express its full confidence in the work being carried out by the Technical Secretariat, especially that of the Coordinator of the Investigation and Identification Team, Ambassador Santiago Oñate. We congratulate everyone on their work, and we encourage everyone to continue on this path in future.

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

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