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SWEDEN

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JOHANNES OLJELUND
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF SWEDEN TO THE
OPCW AT THE NINETY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Let me begin by welcoming you, Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki, back as the Chairperson of the Executive Council, and by thanking Director-General Fernando Arias for providing us with useful guidance through his comprehensive reports to the Council.

Sweden is fully aligned with the statement of the European Union. I would like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

First let me once again reiterate Sweden's full support for the work of the OPCW in the Syrian Arab Republic. We condemn in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Armed Forces, as concluded in the two reports of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), with the latest one published in April. Comprehensive follow-up of these findings must be ensured and those responsible must be held to account.

Sweden recalls that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances, is unacceptable and a violation of international humanitarian law. It is the responsibility of all States to uphold the global norm on the non-use of chemical weapons.

It is deeply regretful that the Syrian Arab Republic continues its stance of non-cooperation with the OPCW. The decision of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the States Parties to suspend the voting rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic was an appropriate response to the continued violation of the Convention. Only the Syrian Arab Republic can take the steps needed to redress the situation. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to reveal the full extent of its chemical weapons programme and to fully comply with the Convention. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the Organisation and its Technical Secretariat.

Over one year has passed since the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny, who was poisoned with a military chemical nerve agent of the novichok group. This assassination attempt against a Russian citizen took place on the territory of the Russian Federation.

We call once again on the government of the Russian Federation to investigate and disclose the circumstances of this crime in full transparency and bring those responsible to justice, and to fully cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation. Accountability for the use of chemical weapons must be established and upheld.



I also want to affirm Sweden's strong confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the OPCW and its Technical secretariat, and we thank you for your unwavering professionalism in carrying out important and very difficult tasks.

To this end, we also support the initiatives to strengthen the Technical Secretariat's ability to maintain key expertise and the knowledge required to ensure the continued implementation of the Convention.

As Sweden has highlighted before, advancing in disarmament and non-proliferation issues requires the integration of gender perspectives. Sweden is fully committed to assist the OPCW in achieving its goals of gender mainstreaming and balanced gender representation. We commend the Director-General for his efforts to that end. There has been much progress in recent years, but work must continue to overcome remaining challenges. The recent gender audit was a positive step to help the Organisation identify areas where further work is needed. Sweden is keen to hear of its outcome, and how the results will be followed up.

As my last point, I would like to emphasise the value of engaging civil society in our common goal to uphold the global norm against the use of chemical weapons. Transparency and openness are fundamental values of the OPCW, and we support and encourage the widest possible participation of representatives of non-governmental organisations at the upcoming and future Conferences of the States Parties.

Thank you.

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