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LITHUANIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR VIDMANTAS PURLYS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Lithuania aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Marjolijn van Deelen, Special Envoy for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, on behalf of the European Union. Allow me to add the following elements in my national capacity.

It is essential to continue our joint efforts to push for accountability for chemical weapons use. We must all work hard to ensure that the vital business of the OPCW is carried out amid the difficulties that the Covid-19 pandemic raises. In these challenging times, I express our sincere appreciation for the leadership of Director-General Fernando Arias. We welcome the Director-General's candidacy for a second term with our full support. Also, Lithuania has full trust in the effective and impartial work of the Technical Secretariat in implementing its functions under the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention").

Let me extend the sincere reassurances of our delegation's full support to H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway, Chairperson of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of States Parties.

Lithuania firmly stands by the notion that any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances is a violation of international law and is completely unacceptable. In this context, we condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of a chemical weapon in the poisoning of Alexei Navalny on 20 August 2020 in Russia. This reprehensible act needs to be properly investigated. Perpetrators of the crime must be brought to justice.

The poisoning of Mr Navalny with novichok has been proven by four independent laboratories. We have urged the Russian authorities many times to address all questions related to this attack in a transparent way and without further delays. Regrettably, to no avail. The most recent attempt to receive relevant information on what has happened in Russian was in the form of written questions under Article 9.2 of the Convention.



Lithuania, along with the other State Parties, does not consider that Note Verbale No. 44 by the Russian Federation answered the specific questions or clarified any of the doubts and concerns raised regarding the internal investigations and further measures taken to prevent future uses of chemical weapons on its territory (Note Verbal No. 093/2021). Therefore, we consider that the Russian Federation did not follow its obligations under the Convention, as no serious attempt was made to answer the specific questions. We urge Russia once again to provide the necessary clarification in accordance with its obligations under the Convention.

It is extremely worrying that the Syrian Arab Republic continues to disregard its obligations under the Convention and deliberately avoids cooperation with the Technical Secretariat. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to ensure compliance with its obligations under the Convention and full cooperation with the OPCW. This is the only possible way to recover its rights and privileges under the Convention, as provided for in the decision adopted by the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

In October 2021, the Ninety-Eighth Session of the Executive Council voted decisively to recommend the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties adopt the OPCW Draft Programme and Budget for 2022–2023. I do encourage all States Parties to agree to the proposed Programme and Budget so that the OPCW can continue fulfilling its essential mission in the coming two years. Let me also stress that the effective functioning of the OPCW relies on payment of assessed contributions in full and on time.

In March 2021, the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council took another important decision “Understanding Regarding the Aerosolised Use of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes” (EC-96/DEC.7, dated 11 March 2021). Lithuania is a co-sponsor of this decision. We believe that it is essential that the Convention remains responsive to new and emerging threats. We encourage States Parties to support the adoption of the decision during current session of the conference.

Mr Chairperson, I would like to reiterate that sea-dumped chemical and conventional munitions and unexploded ordnance pose a high risk for the environmental, human health and economic activities at sea. The Convention requires States Parties to assign the highest priority to ensuring the safety of people and protecting the environment during the implementation of its obligations. We have to strengthen our efforts and co-operation, including through partnerships with the OPCW, in raising awareness of those risks, mapping the affected areas, monitoring the state of corrosion of the munitions, and developing emergency response measures. We believe that the future Centre for Chemistry and Technology will also contribute to co-operation and research on these issues.

I ask that this statement be designated an official document of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and posted on the external server and the public website.

I thank you.