



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Twenty-Sixth Session
29 November – 3 December 2021

C-26/NAT.16
29 November 2021
ENGLISH only

ALBANIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ADIA SAKIQI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

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

I have the honour of submitting this statement on behalf of the Republic of Albania. Albania aligns with the statement from the European Union and would like to highlight the following in a national capacity.

The Republic of Albania would like to express deep appreciation to H.E. Ambassador José Antonio Zabalgoitia Trejo of Mexico, Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, and H.E. Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki of Morocco, Chairperson of the Executive Council, for their tireless efforts, solid guidance, and excellent execution of their duties.

We would also like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway for his election as the Chairperson of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. Your Excellency, you have our full support, and we are convinced that your professionalism and experience will help us reach a successful conclusion at this session of the conference.

We greatly appreciate the statement of Director-General Fernando Arias and commend the professionalism and capacity of the OPCW Technical Secretariat (the Secretariat) to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) and the tasks assigned by the States Parties, despite the potential disruptions imposed by the outbreak of the global pandemic. We would also like to reiterate our appreciation for the work of the Secretariat and our full support and confidence in its integrity and professionalism in implementing the Convention.

Albania recognises and appreciates the long-term efforts of the Director-General to further advance gender balance and geographical distribution of positions in the Secretariat. We are also appreciative of the initiative of the Director-General pertaining to the current gender audit and would like to thank the Director-General for his commitment to improve gender mainstreaming within the OPCW.



On that note, Albania supports the appointment of H.E. Mr Fernando Arias for a second term and encourages the continuation of similar initiatives, to ensure that the OPCW reflects diversity in the workplace.

Albania was elected as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council in June 2021. We enter the Security Council at a time of renewed fractures, when competing interests of old and new powers have increased uncertainty and created a deep mistrust of multilateralism. We join the United Nations Security Council to address these problems, mindful of whom we are and our strategic political alliances as a member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as a European Union candidate country and as a country that held the Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2020.

As a United Nation Security Council member, Albania will give top priority to combating sexual violence in conflicts and promoting the participation of women activists and survivors, open debates on this issue with all United Nation Security Council members and intensify the approach of the council towards the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

We would also like to point out that lack of respect for human rights and freedoms is one of the first signs of impending conflict and is inevitably a feature of conflict in itself. Therefore, we will support receiving regular briefings on situations where serious human rights violations occur, and we will focus our efforts on defining the type of measures that the Security Council should take to respond to them. OPCW and the Security Council work in complementarity with each other and cooperate frequently to achieve similar goals. In this aspect, Albania firmly believes that close cooperation between States Parties is the key to success and will continue to work for what we believe is worth fighting for in favour of peace, development, democracy, human rights and upholding international law.

To this purpose, we want to take a moment to outline that we have previously expressed our concern with the continuous breach of its obligations by the Syrian regime, which was evidenced through comprehensive and thorough investigations conducted by Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). Albania reiterates that the use of chemical weapons, no matter where, no matter when, no matter by whom and no matter under what circumstances, is simply unacceptable. As the States Parties to the OPCW are the guardians of the Convention, it is the ultimate duty of all of us to hold accountable those responsible for the use of chemical weapons.

Albania positively notes the decision adopted by the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to suspend the voting rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic for Syria's non-compliance with the Convention. We consider it to be an appropriate response by the Conference of the States Parties to the failure of the Syrian Arab Republic to adhere to the fundamental principles of the Convention. Only full compliance with the Convention and resolving the outstanding issues by the Syrian Arab Republic can reverse this decision.

As a State Party to the Convention, Albania remains firm on its stance that any use of a chemical weapon should not go unpunished and urge all Member States to join the collective efforts to find the perpetrators accountable for their atrocities.

The States Parties are the guardians of the Convention, which in turn forms the basis for global non-proliferation and disarmament efforts. Therefore, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which implements the achievement of the Convention's main goal—a world free of chemical weapons.

In this regard, we greatly praise the efforts of the Director-General and the Secretariat to ensure that continuous progress is achieved. We appreciate the work of the Secretariat to keep all the State Parties informed on the Syrian Arab Republic dossier. We also wish to commend and confirm our support to the Director-General's steadfast efforts to engage in discourse the Syrian Arab Republic authorities on the matter at hand.

We would also like to commend the IIT for the reports they have released thus far and look forward to receiving the next report.

Albania would like to note that the biennial Draft Programme and Budget for 2022–2023 proposed by the Director-General is adequate and justified. The level of the estimated contributions remains the same for all States Parties. The budget will allow the OPCW to continue its important work in 2022–2023, including cooperation and assistance projects.

We believe that capacity building is essential to assist States Parties in fulfilling their obligations under the Convention and to keep pace with rapidly advancing developments in science and technology. We stand ready to continue supporting capacity-building efforts at the national and regional levels. In addition, we would also like to acknowledge the efforts and continued dedication of the Secretariat to the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) project, and express our belief that the ChemTech Centre will further enhance the Organisation's ability to fulfil its core tasks, as set out in the Convention.

Albania reiterates that any use of chemical weapons is simply unacceptable. Impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not be tolerated. We strongly believe that it is important for the Convention to remain capable of responding to new and emerging threats.

Albania reiterates the call for an impartial international investigation on the use of the novichok toxic chemical as a weapon against Mr Alexei Navalny on 20 August 2020. The use of such a chemical nerve agent pertaining to the novichok group, which is banned under the Convention, was confirmed by two OPCW designated laboratories, as well as by three independent specialised laboratories in Germany, France, and Sweden. We call on the Russian Federation to cooperate with the OPCW and ensure that the perpetrators are identified and punished.

The Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council decided to submit the draft decision "Understanding Regarding the Aerosolised Use of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes" (EC-97/DEC.7, dated 11 March 2021) to the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties for adoption. The Republic of Albania, in the capacity of co-sponsor to this draft-decision, supports and encourages the States Parties to consider conclusively its adoption.

In addressing the unprecedented new challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, which are still ongoing in 2021, ensuring global compliance with the Convention must remain a top priority. We would encourage the Secretariat and States Parties to take targeted and tailored measures to achieve full universality.

The impact of the COVID -19 pandemic on the implementation of the Convention needs to be thoroughly assessed. It is important to take into account experience and best practices, including those of other relevant international organisations, so that we are all better prepared to deal with unforeseen circumstances in the present, as well as in the future. The aim should be to enable the OPCW to carry out its core activities—in particular the convening of Executive Council meetings—in the event of exceptional circumstances, whether in The Hague or remotely through the use of virtual meeting technology. We would like to express our appreciation to the Director-General and the Secretariat for their ongoing efforts in this regard and commend the Federal Republic of Germany for initiating a comprehensive reflection process.

Mr Chairperson, I would kindly ask this statement to be considered as an official document of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and be posted on the external server and public website.

Thank you.

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