

Norwegian statement at the 99th session of the Executive Council,

By H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen,

Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Norway to the OPCW

Madam Chair,

Mr. Director-General,

Distinguished Colleagues,

Norway aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, delivered by Ambassador Luis Vassy.

The following comments are in my own national capacity:

Madam Chair,

The global community is undergoing very trying times.

Through its military aggression against the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, the Russian Federation has blatantly violated international law and is challenging the global security architecture. Norway condemns Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression in the strongest possible terms.

Norway remains a staunch supporter of the OPCW. We are determined – together with partners in the international community – to uphold the

international prohibition against chemical weapons use. Today, the main challenge facing the organization – and all defenders of the Chemical Weapon Convention (CWC) – is the renewed use of chemical weapons.

We condemn vigorously all such use, which is a violation of the Convention and in breach of international law. We demand an end to impunity for the perpetrators of these horrific crimes.

Madam Chair,

Next month marks a year since the 25th session of the Conference of the States Parties made an important decision in response *inter alia* to the first report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The decision was both timely and necessary.

The Syrian Arab Republic's recurrent violations of its obligations under the CWC continue to be a matter of great concern. The Declaration and Assessment Team (DAT) of the OPCW Technical Secretariat (TS) has been unable to conduct its important work in Syria since April 2021. We regret Syria's continuous lack of cooperation in issuing visas to all TS staff members, in clear breach of UN Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). We reiterate our demand that Syrian authorities must cooperate fully with all branches of the OPCW TS, as well as with the OPCW policy-making organs.

Norway commends the rigorous work by the OPCW TS in Syria, and we welcome in particular the two latest reports by the Fact Finding Mission (FFM), which conclude that there are reasonable grounds to believe that chemical weapons were used in Syria in yet two attacks.

We look forward to receiving the next report by the IIT, which will represent important progress towards identifying those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Norway reiterates that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

Madam Chair,

More than a year ago, a Novichok nerve agent was used against the Russian citizen Alexei Navalny. The use of a chemical weapon, as has been confirmed by analyses by several independent laboratories, is a violation of the CWC and international law. So far, the Russian Federation has not provided sufficient answers to the doubt or concern raised on 5 October last year by 45 States Parties, pursuant to Article IX, paragraph 2 of the CWC. We call once more on the Russian Federation to disclose the circumstances of this crime and to prosecute those responsible to the fullest extent of the law.

Madam Chair,

I would also like to use this occasion to congratulate Director-General Fernando Arias on his appointment for a second term in office. We are confident in his work and commitment to this Organisation and remain grateful for his willingness to continue his service for another four years.

Finally, Madam Chair,

Allow me to commend, once more, both the Technical Secretariat and the Bureau for their hard work to ensure that also this meeting of the Executive

Council can take place in a safe and responsible manner. For Norway, this is our last meeting before our mandate as Executive Council member expires in May. I would therefore like to thank all Council members for their constructive cooperation under sometimes challenging conditions, and I wish all incoming Council members success in their important work.