



REGERINGSKANSLIET

Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden

Statement by Sweden
Ninety-ninth Session of the Executive Council
of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
H.E. Ambassador Johannes Oljelund
Permanent Representative of Sweden to the OPCW
The Hague, 8-11 March 2022

Chairperson,

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

Sweden condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Russia bears sole responsibility for this flagrant violation of international law.

Sweden demands that Russia immediately cease its military aggression, withdraw its troops from Ukraine and respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. We demand respect for international law, including international humanitarian law.

Chairperson,

I will now proceed with my regular statement. I would first of all like to thank Director-General Fernando Arias and his staff for their untiring efforts to further the work of the OPCW and to ensure the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria continue to be reported. Let me reiterate again that Sweden condemns in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons. This is a serious violation of international law and their use in armed conflict amounts to a war crime.

The Technical Secretariat has issued two very thorough Fact-Finding Mission reports since our last session. Sadly, we are not surprised to learn that chemical blister agents were most likely used in Marea in September 2015 and chlorine in the incident in Kafr Zeita in October 2016. We thank the Technical Secretariat for its professional work. All relevant findings of the FFM that have not yet been investigated for attribution need to be so as soon as possible, and we are pleased to know that the Investigation and Identification Team is already looking into these reports. Bringing the perpetrators of such crimes to justice remains a high priority.

It is deeply regretful that the Syrian Arab Republic continues its stance of non-cooperation with the OPCW. The decision of CSP25 to suspend the voting rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic was an appropriate response to a 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 Organization and its Technical Secretariat.

Chairperson,

It is also deeply regretful that we, at yet another meeting, must conclude that Russian authorities have failed to respond to demands of the international community to disclose the circumstances around the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny, and to fully cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation. The questions that were put to the Russian Federation by 45 States Parties in October 2021 still remain unanswered. In this context I also want to draw attention to the report on the poisoning of Alexei Navalny issued by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on 10 January 2022, and its clear conclusions and recommendations.

Sweden reiterates that it is the responsibility of all States, including the Russian Federation, to ensure that the global ban on chemical weapons is respected, and that accountability for the use of chemical weapons must be established and upheld.

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

Chairperson,

As Sweden has highlighted before, we see gender equality is an important horizontal priority for the advancement on disarmament and non-proliferation issues. Sweden remains fully committed to assist the OPCW in achieving its goals of gender mainstreaming and a balanced gender representation.

We support and promote the equal participation of women and men in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, and would take this opportunity to encourage States Parties to promote women's participation and strive towards gender-balanced delegations in future meetings, including at the upcoming CWC Review Conference.

Thank you.