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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**STATEMENT BY MR O. N. RYAZANTSEV
DEPUTY MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND TRADE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

As we look back at the results of the past year, it is important to note the serious concern around the state of affairs in The Hague. The trend towards fragmentation is growing stronger here, the practice of taking decisions based on a consensus has been lost, and the atmosphere has become utterly politicised.

The Russian Federation is thus all the more concerned, as it was one of the founders of the Chemical Weapons Convention and scrupulously and unconditionally carries out the obligations it has undertaken. One of the examples of such is the completion of the elimination of the largest chemical arsenal in the world, which it inherited from the Soviet Union, three years ahead of schedule. We call upon the United States, as the only State currently in possession of chemical weapons, to follow our example and complete its chemical demilitarisation process before the deadline.

We see the primary cause of our Organisation's drift away from its technical designation as the desire of a small group of States to alter international law—in this case, the Convention—with their own contrived rules. In 2018, under pressure from the United States and its allies, the notorious and illegitimate decision to assign the OPCW Technical Secretariat prosecutor-type functions that are extrinsic to it, thus allowing it to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons—going far beyond the scope of the Convention and encroaching upon the exclusive prerogative of the United Nations Security Council. This regrettable fact preordained, many years ahead, the negative development of events in The Hague, exacerbating the polarisation of the stances of the States Parties to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The group of States led by the United States consider themselves to be the wielders of the truth and the final authority when it comes to the non-proliferation of chemical weapons. This has made it possible, under the pretext of combatting impunity for the use of chemical weapons, to launch a mud-slinging campaign against a number of countries—primarily Syria.



The illegitimate Investigation and Identification Team is operating in full swing; it has—based on unconvincing and sometimes simply falsified conclusions of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) investigating the use of chemical weapons in Syria—taken it upon itself to issue accusatory findings against Damascus, having forgotten that Syria, in spite of the difficult situation in the region, voluntarily joined the Convention. The culmination of this process was the deprivation of the rights and privileges of a State Party—Syria—under the Convention: a first in the history of the Organisation. The biased and unjust decision taken by the Conference at its Twenty-Fifth Session does not do any honour to our Organisation. It is this kind of attitude towards Syria—a fully-fledged member of the OPCW—that holds back other States that are currently outside of the umbrella of the Convention from taking the decision to accede to this international treaty.

To the contrary, the OPCW was meant to unite the States Parties to the Convention in order to resolve current important issues related to the global elimination of chemical weapons and the prevention of their re-emergence.

It is against this backdrop that the Secretariat's work resulted in objections among many delegations. This is primarily related to the scandal that unfolded around the preparation of the FFM report on the chemical incident that took place in Douma, Syria, in April 2018. Despite the calls for an honest investigation by States Parties, as well as the international community, leading scientists, and experts—including the first Director-General, Mr Bustani—the Secretariat preferred to keep quiet. This only heightened suspicions that the report had been completely rewritten in order to justify the unprovoked aggression against the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic on the night of 14 April 2018 by the United States, Great Britain, and France.

Our Organisation is also being derailed by the orchestration, by a small group of countries, of a campaign related to the imaginary poisoning of Mr Navalny in August 2020. They are demanding that Russia, in collaboration with the Secretariat, conduct an investigation into what took place. At the front and centre of these so-called concerned States, we see Great Britain, Germany, France, and Sweden. Yet it is these very same countries that are doing everything in their power to ensure that the truth never sees the light of day. This is the only way to interpret their stubborn unwillingness—bordering on cynicism—to provide substantive answers to the requests of the Russian Federation under paragraph 2 of Article IX of the Convention. They only ignore them completely, or only provide information that cannot in any way be considered “sufficient to answer the doubt or concern raised along with an explanation of how the information provided resolves the matter”. We will continue to insist on receiving exhaustive answers both from the aforementioned countries and from the Secretariat. From the latter, as before, we expect our legitimate request for the provision of video materials that were recorded during the provision of technical assistance in Germany to be met. This data is crucial to ensure compliance with chain-of-custody procedures.

We are deeply concerned by the Secretariat's explanation of the inability to provide the technical assistance that Russia requested under paragraph 38(e) of Article VIII of the Convention referring to certain “standard” procedures in these types of situations. In other words, we are being assured that because the working parameters for OPCW experts in Great Britain and Germany were different, the Secretariat just cannot meet us halfway. The flaw in this conclusion is obvious to any unbiased person. The Secretariat has really only been busy putting its own conditions for cooperation in place, applicable exclusively for conducting investigations into the fabricated use of chemical weapons.

It has to be said that over the past years, the OPCW—in spite of the promises made by the management of the Secretariat—has not become our “common home”, where States Parties are able to freely and respectfully hold a dialogue that takes mutual interests into account in order to identify a solution for outstanding issues.

During the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference, the United States and its allies plan to push through yet another illegitimate decision through a vote, in circumvention of the Convention. It is with complete and total disregard for the procedures for making changes to the Convention that the infamous “understanding” on the use of aerosolised nervous central system-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes is being foisted upon the States Parties. This approach is not aligned with the object or purpose of the Convention, which is why we are categorically opposed to adopting this decision.

We believe that one of the most important steps for the Organisation on the path to financial stability is the transition to a biennial budget cycle. The budget is the lifeblood of the Organisation. We proceed based on the need to find a common denominator when it comes to an issue that is so critical for the vital functions of the OPCW. Unfortunately, once again, the draft of the main financial document has funds assigned to cover the expenses of the illegitimate attribution mechanism. For this reason, we cannot agree to approve the draft in its current form.

We are convinced that these problems can be resolved through political will on the part of the States Parties. This requires taking a step back from the path of inflammatory confrontation, restoring unity within our Organisation, and returning to the priority of taking consensus-based decisions. It is important to do this both ahead of the forthcoming preparations for the Fifth Review Conference, which is scheduled for 2023, and for the interests of achieving our global objective: the universality of the Convention.

I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and published on Catalyst and the OPCW’s website.

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