



OPCW

Executive Council

Ninety-Seventh Session
6 – 8 July 2021

EC-97/NAT.61
6 July 2021
ENGLISH only

LITHUANIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR VIDMANTAS PURLYS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA TO THE
OPCW AT THE NINETY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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

Lithuania aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Sanja Štiglic, Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the OPCW on behalf of the European Union and would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

I congratulate H.E. Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki for his appointment as the new Chairperson of the Executive Council and assure him of my delegation's full support during his tenure. We also continue to lend our full support and our confidence in Director-General Fernando Arias, along with the Technical Secretariat, to carry out their important work. We have full confidence in the professionalism and impartiality of the OPCW teams.

As have been stated many times before, impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not be tolerated. We must also take all necessary actions to ensure that the global norm prohibiting the use of chemical weapons is not compromised.

We are deeply concerned that the Russian Federation did not disclose the circumstances of the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny who was poisoned in Russia by a military grade chemical nerve agent of the novichok group in August 2020. We also find it striking that the Russian Federation no longer considers the technical assistance visit by the Technical Secretariat relevant, even though the use of the chemical weapon on the Russian ground has been confirmed by four different and trusted laboratories (Germany, France, Sweden, and the OPCW).

We condemn such blatant violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter "the Convention") and strongly support efforts of bringing those responsible for this heinous attack to justice. We regret that in May 2021 a military court in Moscow has upheld a lower court's decision to reject a lawsuit filed by jailed Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny over the refusal to launch a probe into his poisoning. We urge the Russian Federation to fully disclose the circumstances of the assassination attempt, which seems to reflect a possible broader scope of similar incidents, without further delay.



More than a year ago it was found that the Syrian Arab Republic has used chemical weapons in three separate attacks on its territory in 2017. The Syrian Arab Republic has failed to comply with the Convention and to follow the steps laid by the Executive Council last July. Therefore, the Conference of the States Parties earlier this year addressed the Syrian Arab Republic's breaches of international law and suspended a set of rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic. We continue to fight impunity by sending a clear signal that such use of the chemical weapons will not be tolerated.

Meanwhile the second Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) report was issued attributing yet another chemical weapons attack in the Syrian Arab Republic to the Assad regime. We strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances and demand the cessation of such use.

Lithuania has full trust in the OPCW's leadership and the professional manner in which the Technical Secretariat carries out all missions in the Syrian Arab Republic. We strongly support the impartial and independent work of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and IIT. We do regret the lack of cooperation from the Syrian Arab Republic and call on the Syrian Government to fully disclose and verifiably destroy its chemical weapons programme.

Lithuania continues to support the valuable work of the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

I would like to mention that it is important that the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology steadily advances with the target of becoming operational by early 2023. It provides a good opportunity to expand the OPCW's current programmes to some new important areas, for example, the sea-dumped chemical weapons.

Understanding the importance of the OPCW being the implementing body for the Convention, we do support the business continuity initiative that Germany has launched last year, trying to develop consensus among States Parties for allowing the Executive Council to convene remotely in cases where the Council is not in a position to do so in-person.

We ask that this statement be made an official document of the Ninety-Seventh Session of the Executive Council and published on the external server and the public website of the OPCW.

Thank you.

--- 0 ---