

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JOSEPH MANSO PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE OPCW AT THE ONE HUNDREDTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Director-General,
Distinguished Ambassadors and Delegates,

We stand together here at the 100th Session of the Executive Council as this year marks the 25th anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Convention has shown its utility time and again, demonstrated by the commitment of the vast majority of States Parties to comply with it and hold accountable those that violate it. We commend the Director-General for his professionalism in executing the OPCW's mission at a difficult time in history. Unfortunately, this occasion is overshadowed by the Russian Federation's disinformation campaign and threats to use chemical weapons as it continues its premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustified war against Ukraine. The United States reaffirms its unwavering support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and expresses its solidarity with both the Ukrainian government and the people of Ukraine. We commend the Technical Secretariat and States Parties for responding to Ukraine's requests for assistance and protection, as provided for under the Convention.

Mr. Chairperson,

For our part, the United States continues to uphold its obligations under the Convention to eliminate the remaining U.S. chemical weapons stockpile in Pueblo, Colorado, and Richmond, Kentucky. The United States has destroyed over 98 percent of its stockpile since entry-into-force, with only 542 metric tonnes, or 1.95 percent, remaining to be destroyed. In May of this year, the United States completed destruction of all VX munitions in the U.S. stockpile. In March of this year, the United States hosted a virtual U.S. Chemical Demilitarization Transparency Event for regional groups' delegates. This virtual event reaffirmed the United States' commitment to the transparent, safe, and timely destruction of its chemical weapons stockpile. Furthermore, once public health and safety concerns improve, we endeavor to host an in-person Executive Council visit as we near the end of the U.S. stockpile destruction process.

Mr. Chairperson,

We do not see the same commitment to transparency from or adherence to the tenets of the Convention by certain States Parties. Over the past several months, the Russian Federation has leveled false allegations against Ukraine regarding chemical weapons use. The Russian government's accusations are nothing more than a distraction as the Russian Federation seeks to validate its unprovoked and devastating war of aggression against Ukraine.

It is Russia, not Ukraine, that is in non-compliance with the Chemicals Weapons Convention. Despite its denials and obfuscations, the Russian Federation has used chemical weapons at least twice in recent years in assassination attempts – first against Sergei and Yulia Skripal in 2018 and then against Aleksey Navalny in 2020. There is no doubt that the Russian Federation is responsible for these actions. And yet, our questions about these incidents continue to go unanswered. The Russian Federation needs to explain the use of a chemical weapon against Mr. Navalny, declare its remaining chemical weapons program, and verifiably destroy any chemical weapons it continues to possess, including Novichok nerve agents.

States Parties to this Convention must work each and every day to hold the Russian Federation to account for its actions.

Mr. Chairperson,

Russia's disinformation campaign, with which we are all too familiar, also extends to the Syria file. Both Russia and Syria maintain that the push for accountability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria has been politicized against Syria. Russia and Syria have sought to actively undermine the international community's work by repeating a variety of outlandish claims, including that non-state actors were the only parties responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. To date, the Director-General has released over 100 reports on the OPCW's progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons program. The Syrian regime has blocked the 25th round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team for over a year. Nearly nine years later, Syria's declaration still cannot be considered "complete and accurate," and we have seen no real effort from Syria to comply with its obligations. States Parties agree that this behavior is wholly unacceptable, as demonstrated by last year's decision to suspend certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention. We look forward to receiving the Technical Secretariat's next Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) reports identifying the perpetrators of additional cases of confirmed chemical weapons use in Syria. We trust the Secretariat to make those determinations in the same professional, independent, and impartial manner as with previous reports.

Mr. Chairperson,

While we must remain vigilant and work to hold to account those responsible for the use of chemical weapons, we must also look forward to what lies ahead. Last December, the Conference of the States Parties (CSP) overwhelmingly approved the decision on aerosolized use of central nervous system-acting chemicals in recognition of the evolving nature of chemical weapons threats. This next year presents an opportunity for this Organization to further reinforce the implementation of the treaty for the future as we approach the Fifth Review Conference. This Organization has a mandate to maintain the highest standards of international verification, support to national implementation, and international cooperation and exchange of scientific and technical information. The United States looks forward to contributing to an open dialogue with all States Parties to review the operation of this Convention. In addition to our shared core commitment to prevent the possibility of chemical weapons use, we should consider how the upcoming launch of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology can ensure the Organization will adapt and respond to real world chemical threats, address emerging threats such as chemical

terrorism and novel chemical weapons, enhance international cooperation, remain committed to geographic and gender diversity, and recommit to strong internal management and budget discipline.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is unfortunate that there remains a threat of chemical weapons use in the world during the 100th Session of the Executive Council. It is especially concerning that certain threats emanate from States Parties in opposition to the core purpose of the Chemical Weapons Convention and this Organization. As all States Parties take a moment to consider their obligations under the Convention, let us all recommit to upholding the Convention. Rules are enacted for a reason, and they should be defended for all the same reasons that we agreed to them a quarter-century ago.

I ask that this statement be designated an official document of this Council session and posted on both Catalyst and the public website.