

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR NEILAS TANKEVIČIUS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

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

Lithuania aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Joanneke Balfort, on behalf of the European Union. Allow me to add the following elements in my national capacity.

Lithuania commends the leadership of OPCW Director General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, and expresses its full trust in the effective and impartial work of the Technical Secretariat in implementing its functions under the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”). Let me equally extend the sincere reassurances of our delegation’s full support and appreciation to H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Madonsela of South Africa, Chairperson of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of States Parties.

This session of the Conference will remain overshadowed by Russia’s war of aggression, which has led to repercussions globally. We reiterate in the strongest possible terms our condemnation of the unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, which constitutes a blatant violation of the UN Charter and international law, and demand that Russia immediately cease its military actions, unconditionally withdraw all forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respect Ukraine’s territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognised borders. We strongly condemn the Russian Federation’s attempts to illegally annex Ukrainian regions, which have no legal validity or effect.

Russia’s unlawful military attacks against civilian infrastructure in Ukraine greatly increases the risk of accidents involving industrial chemicals. Besides this reckless behaviour, Russia has also used disinformation to spread baseless accusations about chemical weapons “provocations” being prepared in Ukraine. It is well established that Ukraine is a responsible member of, and in full compliance with the Chemical weapons Convention.

We remind once again that it is the Russian Federation that has blatantly violated the Convention by actually using chemical weapons in the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny in 2020 and in Salisbury in 2018. We urge the Russian Federation to provide substantial answers to the questions posed by 45 States Parties in the framework of Art. IX, paragraph 2 of the Convention on 5 October 2021, and to disclose without further delay the circumstances of the assassination attempt against Mr. Navalny. We will continue to work towards ensuring that there is no impunity for those responsible for such heinous attacks.

Lithuania firmly stands by the notion that any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances is a violation of international law and completely unacceptable.

It is extremely worrying that Syria has still failed to comply with the Convention, including not complying with its obligation to allow full and unfettered access to OPCW personnel. We urge Syria

to act constructively and cooperate fully with the Technical Secretariat, and issue visas without delay for all staff members of the OPCW, including all the members of the Declaration Assessment Team.

Lithuania supports the valuable work of the Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons and remains strongly convinced that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be brought to justice.

We encourage all States Parties to agree to the Director-General's proposed revision of the Programme and Budget for 2023, so the OPCW can continue all approved programmatic activities, including its critical work investigating the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The proposed revision provides an adequate response to the Organisation's current inflation predicament. Let me also stress here that the effective functioning of the OPCW relies on payment of assessed contributions in full and on time.

Let me add a couple of words on the sea-dumped chemical weapons. Realising the possible risks and dangers, many States, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, as well as scientific and academic institutions have been promoting international cooperation on sea-dumped chemical weapons, exchange of information and lessons learned, including on their safe disposal. We believe that there is a need to consider a possible role the OPCW might play here to support the State Parties and other international organisations. Against this background and with the view to the 5th Review Conference, Lithuania, together with Poland, have put forward a Working Paper on broadening international cooperation on sea-dumped chemical weapons. We kindly ask all States Parties of the CWC to consider co-sponsoring the proposed document. Moreover – on Monday, 28 November, during the lunch break, a side-event on the sea dumped chemical weapons is organized by both delegations - Lithuania and Poland.

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

I thank you, Mr Chairperson.