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**RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR A.V. SHULGIN  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO  
THE OPCW AT THE 101ST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,  
Mr Director-General,  
Distinguished delegates,

First allow me, on behalf of the delegation of the Russian Federation, to wish you, Mr Chairperson, every success in this important post and to assure you of our full support and readiness to cooperate constructively in order to ensure that the work of the Executive Council is as successful as possible.

We are meeting at a complicated and dramatic moment. Crises are on the rise, and the state of affairs in international security is steadily deteriorating. At various international platforms, Western countries are drawing “dividing lines”, taking advantage of bloc mentality and certain rules based on pseudo-democratic values. They use the principle of “if you’re not with us, you’re against us”. Intensified negative trends are being observed within the walls of the OPCW. Instead of honest dialogue and the search for compromise, one now must deal with decisions being pushed through by vote and a group of Western countries steamrolling a self-serving agenda. The politicisation of this once technical Organisation has now stooped to new lows.

The latest example is the persistent chemical threat in Ukraine. Since December 2021, the Russian Ministry of Defence has been providing warnings of potential chemical provocations by Ukrainian paramilitary units, and has also recorded incidents of their use of chemically hazardous facilities for military purposes. We regularly inform the OPCW of this information. Most regrettably, some of our warnings about chemical provocations in the works proved to be true. The prevention of similar criminal acts is the shared responsibility of the States Parties to the Convention. However, Western countries have been uncompromisingly unwilling to acknowledge our warnings. Moreover, unfounded accusations, disinformation, and slander are already being slung in our direction.

Unfortunately, we are seeing more of a trend in which the Organisation’s intrinsically technical documents are deliberately imbued with an element of political demagoguery. This is plainly evident in the “Financial Reports of the OPCW and Report by the External Auditor for the Year 2021”. In this document, the Organisation’s financial complications in 2021 are based on the special military operation in Ukraine—which had not yet even begun. The use of the term “war” is not aligned with the practices in place at dedicated international organisations, especially those that are not part of the United Nations system.



The story being spun by the United States of America and its allies about the imaginary poisoning of Mr Navalny is completely politicised. Russia has set out its position in depth, thoroughly detailing the steps that have been taken, and has attempted to establish contacts at every possible level in order to determine what actually took place. But over the course of the past two years, Berlin, London, Paris, and Stockholm have not managed to provide any clear answers whatsoever to the questions we have asked them. It is perfectly obvious to any objective observer: these self-proclaimed anti-impunity warriors are completely uninterested in the truth. Instead of a civilised dialogue, States Parties are being aggressively forced into a state of hysteria in connection with a violation of the Convention that allegedly took place.

Without a doubt, the clearest watershed issue at the OPCW is “attribution”. Granting the Technical Secretariat the authority to identify the parties guilty of the use of chemical weapons is completely unlawful. This new development lies outside of the Organisation’s mandate and undermines the exclusive authority of the United Nations Security Council. As an element that is completely extraneous to the Convention, the “attribution-wielding” Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) is becoming the cause of the widening divide among the States Parties and leading to the erosion of confidence in the OPCW within the international community. The decision to deprive Syria of its rights and privileges—forced through based on the IIT’s conclusions—is pushing the Organisation into a dead end from which it is becoming increasingly difficult to find a way out. Moreover, setting this precedent of such a cynical reprisal for a State Party essentially puts at risk the efforts to achieve universality of the Convention.

At the same time, and in spite of all the difficulties, Damascus continues to openly cooperate with the OPCW within the framework of the mechanisms put into place by the Convention and the additional obligations that it voluntarily undertook. We welcome Syria’s initiative to hold a working visit in Beirut, as well as its willingness to hold the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), as the Syrian side has repeatedly stated in its monthly reports. We believe that the high-level negotiations planned between Director-General Arias and Syria’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Mekdad will make it possible to bring their positions closer together and find a way to resolve disputes within the framework of the Convention. We will address the matter of the Syrian “chemical dossier” in more detail when the relevant agenda items are under discussion.

During this session, the Council will consider the draft revised OPCW Programme and Budget for 2023. We are very concerned about the Secretariat’s tendency in recent years to prepare “omnibus” budget decisions that stipulate the suspension “on an exceptional basis” of provision 6.3 of the financial rules and the allocation of cash balances to special funds. Time and again, we are assured that this is a temporary measure. However, it has in fact become a regular occurrence.

We agree that the members of the Council have the right to take a decision about any use of the cash balance from past years. However, each State in this case may only manage its share (!) of the total amount of the cash balance. Correspondingly, decisions on this matter must be taken exclusively by consensus. If there is no consensus, then the Secretariat must apply the provisions of the financial rules, namely, the Organisation must return to the States Parties the funds attributed to them. The countries that find it necessary to support certain budgetary initiatives of the Secretariat may do so through the allocation of voluntary contributions.

We are categorically opposed to the use of monetary funds from the Russian Federation to finance any attribution-related activities, with which we do not agree as a matter of principle.

Among other pressing matters is the real, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of the provisions of Article XI of the Convention, which stipulates the establishment of international cooperation in the field of peaceful “chemistry” and the removal of barriers to the economic and technological development of all countries. Yet the statements supporting the efforts under Article XI must be backed up with real action, and not based on selective approaches. The Russian Federation has not forgotten that 300,000 tonnes of Russian fertilizers were detained at European ports and has been offering to transfer them free of charge to countries in Africa that need them, but the European Union has not responded. Moreover, the United States and its allies continue to impose unlawful unilateral sanctions against States Parties that they find undesirable, including in the field of the chemical industry. This policy is a flagrant violation of the provisions of Article XI of the Convention.

We believe that the most important objective of the Convention is the destruction of existing stockpiles of chemical weapons. The absence in the world of military-grade toxic agents is the best and most reliable guarantee against their use. In this regard, we call upon the only possessor State—the United States of America—to demonstrate its adherence to its obligations under the Convention—not in word, but in deed—and to complete as soon as possible the chemical demilitarisation of the country. The United States has in place all the resources it needs: financial, administrative, and technical; all that remains now is to demonstrate its political will.

We are grateful to the delegation of China for organising a virtual visit to the Haerbaling abandoned chemical weapons destruction site for the Chairman of the Council, the Director-General, and Council representatives on 15 September 2022. We take note of the information about the need for a regular extension of the deadline for the destruction of abandoned chemical weapons and strongly urge Japan to accelerate the rate of the work being carried out in China.

As the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles nears completion, the importance of oversight of chemical industry activities increases. Without a doubt, the surge in the coronavirus infection pandemic has substantially affected the efforts of the OPCW Secretariat in terms of the implementation of Article VI of the Convention, and States Parties have been understanding about the introduction of temporary measures in this regard. However, the weakening of the verification regime—one of the most important conditions in preventing the possibility of the re-emergence of chemical weapons—is unacceptable. As the public health situation around the world begins to go back to normal, we call upon the Secretariat to establish effective, regularly scheduled activities in this area.

The Russian Federation underscores the importance of strictly complying with the Rules of Procedure of the OPCW Executive Council and notes the exceptional nature of the modalities via which this session is being held during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, this practice must not become routine; it must be adjusted in concert with improvements in the host country and around the world, and restrictions must be lifted in the interests of ensuring the full and effective participation of the delegations of the Council’s Member States in the work of said policy-making organ.

In conclusion, Mr Chairperson, I would again assure you that the Russian delegation is intent on participating constructively in the review of and decision making on all the matters on the agenda for this Council session, and we expect the same approach from the others.

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the 101st Session of the Council and published on the Catalyst platform and the OPCW website.

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