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**LATVIA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR AIGA LIEPIŅA  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA  
TO THE OPCW AT THE 101ST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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

Latvia aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

For more than 200 days the world has been witnessing the Russian Federation's unjustified and unprovoked war against Ukraine. Russia's illegal military actions and brutality towards Ukrainian civilian population and infrastructure clearly constitute violation of the international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter. The negative consequences of this illegal war by Russia can be felt not only in Europe, but also on a global scale, thus damaging economies, disrupting global food supplies, and creating instability in world energy markets.

Latvia strongly condemns the Russian Federation's aggression and calls on Russia to 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. Ukraine is exercising its legitimate right to defend itself against the Russian aggression to regain full control of its territory and has the right to liberate occupied territories within its internationally recognised borders. Latvia will continue to support Ukraine and will assist in rebuilding the country as a democratic, modern, and economically flourishing one.

It is quite evident that Russia's aggression against Ukraine has been accompanied by a targeted disinformation campaign falsely accusing Ukraine of using or preparing to use chemical substances in Ukraine. Over the course of the last months, there have been many occasions when the Russian Federation used the framework of international institutions, including the OPCW and the United Nations to spread baseless allegations to discredit Ukraine's standing as a country that fully complies with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention"). Latvia deplors all of these Russian disinformation efforts.

Reiterating threats to use weapons of mass destruction is a highly irresponsible step by Russia, which poses even greater security risks to the rules-based global order.



Latvia remains concerned that the Russian Federation has not responded to calls by the international community, including the European Union, for a thorough and transparent investigation into the assassination attempt on the Russian opposition politician Mr Alexei Navalny, who was poisoned in Russia by a military chemical nerve agent of the novichok group in August 2020. Impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not be tolerated. It is of high importance that those responsible for the assassination attempt on Mr Navalny must be brought to justice. Latvia will support all efforts in this regard.

The decision adopted by the Twenty-Fifth Conference of the States Parties to the Convention suspending the voting rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic because of Syria's failure to comply with the Convention served as a powerful signal by the international society against impunity for the use of chemical weapons. Syria has not yet demonstrated its willingness to cooperate in good faith with the Technical Secretariat. Therefore, Latvia urges Syria to engage constructively with the Secretariat to resolve the pending issues, declare the full extent of its chemical weapons programme, and return to full compliance with the Convention.

Latvia strongly holds the view that the Convention is a key instrument of the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. Regrettably, there have been numerous cases of repeated use of chemical weapons in recent years, which constitutes a significant threat to international peace and security. Latvia agrees that upcoming the Fifth Review Conference will be an appropriate occasion to consider ways to strengthen international norms prohibiting chemical weapons. Latvia supports efforts by the Chairperson, Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia, to steer the work of the Open-Ended Working Group and gather multiple views with a goal of building consensus.

To conclude, Latvia would like to take this opportunity to express gratitude to the Director-General for heading the Organisation and ensuring the implementation of the Convention during these challenging times. Latvia reiterates its full confidence in the Technical Secretariat's professionalism and impartiality.

We ask that this statement be considered as an official document of the Executive Council and published on the external server and the public website of the OPCW.

Thank you.

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