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POLAND

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND TO THE
OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE
OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

Poland fully aligns itself with the European Union statement. However, I would like to make the following points in my national capacity:

The Polish delegation joins others in thanking H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway, Chairperson of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, and H.E. Ambassador Ziad Al Atiyah of Saudi Arabia, Chairperson of the Executive Council, for their leadership and personal engagement in caring out their duties. We would also like to congratulate H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Madonsela of South Africa for his election as the Chairperson of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties and assure him of our full engagement and support for the positive outcome of this session.

This year's session of the Conference of the States Parties is taking place against the background of an extremely challenging political and security environment. In February 2022 the Russian Federation started its unjustifiable, unprovoked, and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and since then it has been continuing to wage a brutal war of attrition, targeting the civilian population and critical infrastructure, and committing atrocities and war crimes that Europe has not seen since the Second World War. All under a false pretence of a "special operation", which is nothing more than an imperialistic attempt to subdue a neighbouring country and trample on its sovereignty, democratic choices, independence and territorial integrity.

Poland condemns, in the strongest possible terms, Russia's aggression against Ukraine and joins others in demanding that Russia immediately withdraws all its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine and that it fully respects Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence within its internationally recognised borders. We also condemn Russia for its campaign of disinformation and state-controlled propaganda, conducted as part of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and aimed at spreading unsubstantiated and unfounded allegations against Ukraine and others regarding chemical weapons.

Russia's war against Ukraine grossly violates the United Nations Charter, undermining global security and the rules-based international order in which the OPCW plays an important role. By invading Ukraine, the Russian Federation has proved beyond doubt that it does not act in



good faith in international relations, questioning its role in all international fora, including in the OPCW. An approach of trust and good faith are essential for the work of the OPCW and for the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention), which is heavily based on common purpose, on verifiable and trustworthy declarations. Russia has shown us clearly that it preaches one thing and does another. That it does not care about its international obligations, about peace and security. It has ruined its international standing and reputation. Russia’s behaviour in this regard undermines non-proliferation regimes and substantially weakens disarmament processes.

In the present situation, almost all members of the Eastern European Group (EEG) are of the view that Russia, while waging a war of aggression against another EEG State Party, should not be given prominent positions in the OPCW. We believe that the reasons for that are clear. This is a matter of principle, and we call on other States Parties to show the same approach. Poland fully supports the candidatures of Croatia and Latvia for EEG’s Vice-Chairperson(s) of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

With continuing concerns that Russia might decide to carry out its threats and resort to the use weapons of mass destruction, possibly also chemical weapons, it is understandable that the OPCW closely follows the developments in Ukraine. States Parties must be ready to act swiftly and decisively in case of any violation of the Convention. We believe that when it comes to preventing such violations it is necessary to make sure that there is no impunity for the use of chemical weapons and that all perpetrators of such crimes are held accountable. The OPCW has the necessary tools at its disposal. The work of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), to attribute the use of chemical weapons in Syria, should be a sober reminder. Poland supports the work of the IIT and looks forward to the release of its next reports. We also support calls on the Syrian Arab Republic to resume full cooperation with the Technical Secretariat, resolve all pending issues in its declaration, and return to full compliance with the Convention.

Poland strongly believes that all violations of the Convention should be treated in an equally serious manner. Therefore, we must not forget about the assassination attempt on Mr Alexei Navalny, who was poisoned in Russia in August 2020 with the use of a military grade nerve agent of the novichok group, developed by Russia. The same substance was used to poison Mr Sergei Skripal in 2018. In both cases the Russian authorities have failed to conduct a thorough and transparent investigation and bring the perpetrators to account. Poland reiterates its call on the Russian Federation to fully disclose its clandestine chemical weapons programme.

The OPCW plays an instrumental role in promoting and verifying the implementation of the Convention. In order to maintain its full capabilities to operate effectively we must ensure that it has predictable and solid financial resources. Poland supports the proposed OPCW Draft Revised Programme and Budget for 2023, and we call on others to do likewise.

April 2022 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of entry into force of the Convention. However, the celebrations were tainted by Russian aggression against Ukraine and concerns about the possible use of chemical weapons. In this demanding context, we need to address challenges and threats for the Convention in the future. Next year’s Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Fifth Review Conference) will offer a great opportunity for taking stock of the situation and choosing a future direction for the OPCW. Defining new priorities could be another milestone for our Organisation. Poland thanks the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group, Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia, for conducting the preparatory work for the Fifth Review Conference in a transparent and inclusive

manner. We are highly interested in a tangible outcome of the Review Conference, which should offer guidance for further strengthening the chemical weapons non-proliferation regime. We see an added value in enhancing the verification in the framework of the Convention as the core element of the effective non-proliferation regime. We will also support initiatives aiming at reinforcing chemical safety and security and analysing new tendencies and scientific and technological developments, which will affect the implementation of the Convention in the years to come.

While considering challenges and opportunities for the Organisation, we believe there is merit in discussing the topic of sea-dumped chemical weapons. Poland believes that the OPCW might make a valuable input to the international efforts undertaken in various formats aimed at tackling the problem of sea-dumped chemical weapons, and that the Technical Secretariat might support the voluntary cooperation of States Parties on the matter. Poland highly appreciates the positive approach of the Secretariat to the matter and the open-minded and helpful stance of Director-General Fernando Arias as well as the fact that he does not avoid this topic in his meetings with the authorities of individual States Parties. As the ambitious project to establish an OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology advances—and it seems that the target of having it operational by early 2023 will be reached—we believe that the Centre could play an important role in facilitating the voluntary cooperation of the States Parties on the sea-dumped chemical weapons as part of its activities. We would like to continue discussing sea-dumped chemical weapons in the coming months and encourage all States Parties to engage in a constructive and open-minded manner. Poland and Lithuania have decided to organise a side event dedicated to sea-dumped chemical weapons in the margins of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

We would like to raise awareness of the problem of dumped chemical weapons amongst States Parties. We are also planning to present a joint working paper with Lithuania on the matter shortly and hope it will be supported by a good number of co-sponsors.

Mr Chairperson, the international community should do whatever possible to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons and their use by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances. Poland keeps underlying this in the discussions at the OPCW, but also in the United Nations General Assembly resolution on the implementation of the Convention that we prepare every year. Since many years the resolution has been making an important contribution to promoting implementation of the Convention and supporting further strengthening of the chemical non-proliferation regime. We are pleased that this year the support for the resolution in the United Nations General Assembly First Committee was higher than in previous years (with 156 votes in support) and hope for a good result in the vote of the General Assembly at the beginning of December. The overwhelming support for the resolution is a clear indication that the international community is not indifferent to threats and challenges related to the use of chemical weapons. It also sends the message of a strong and unwavering support for the efforts of the OPCW Director-General and the Technical Secretariat. I would like to express my confidence, that the members of the OPCW will widely support the resolution during voting in December this year.

I kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you.