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SWEDEN

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JOHANNES OLJELUND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF SWEDEN TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

Sweden fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and I wish to add a few remarks on behalf of my country.

Let me start by welcoming you, H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Philemon Madonsela of South Africa, as Chairperson of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”). I assure you of the full support of my delegation in this endeavour. Let me also thank H.E. Ambassador Ziad M. D. Al Atiyah of Saudi Arabia for his efforts in the preparations for this session of the Conference of the States Parties as Chairperson of the Executive Council.

Furthermore, I seize this opportunity to thank you, Director-General Fernando Arias, and the staff of the OPCW. It is due to your diligent commitment that the mission of this Organisation is carried out in such a commendable manner. Sweden appreciates the hard work that you do and reiterates its wholehearted support for the Organisation as a whole.

On 24 February of this year an already challenging international security environment deteriorated dramatically. Sweden reiterates in the strongest terms its condemnation of the Russian Federation’s illegal aggression against Ukraine. We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Sweden is appalled by the Russian forces’ attacks on civilian infrastructure, including chemical industrial plants in Ukraine, with severe risks for human life and an ecological disaster.

The Russian Federation uses the framework of international institutions, including the OPCW and the United Nations, to spread baseless allegations and to discredit Ukraine’s standing as a country that fully complies with its obligations under the Convention.

Russia’s war against Ukraine has had a severe negative impact on our common disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control work and has hampered multilateral cooperation and dialogue.



Mr Chairperson, let me once again reiterate Sweden's strong support for the work of the OPCW in the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons dossier. We commend the genuine and continuing efforts of the Secretariat, through the Declaration Assessment Team, to clarify the shortcomings noted in the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration. We reiterate that the Syrian Arab Republic must fully cooperate with the Secretariat in order to end the current situation of paralysis. We continue to urge the Syrian Arab Republic to reveal the full extent of its chemical weapons programme and to fully comply with the Convention.

The Fact-Finding Mission, the Declaration Assessment Team and the Investigation and Identification Team play equally important roles in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention, of UN Security Council Resolution 2118 and related decisions of the OPCW. The expertise, integrity and professionalism of these units should never be questioned by any States Party for political gain.

It is deeply regretful that we, at yet another meeting of States Parties, must conclude that Russian authorities have failed to respond to demands of the international community, to disclose the circumstances around the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny, and to fully cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation. The questions that were put to the Russian Federation by 45 States Parties in October 2021 remain unanswered.

Sweden reiterates that it is the responsibility of all States, including the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic, to ensure that the global ban on chemical weapons is respected, and that all those who have used chemical weapons must be identified and held to account.

Mr Chairperson, the recurring use of chemical weapons sends a clear signal: the OPCW's role within the disarmament and non-proliferation framework remains crucial. The OPCW deserves the full support of all States Parties to the Convention—politically, technically, and financially—in its efforts to uphold the global norm against chemical weapons.

The OPCW needs to have flexibility to retain the specialised expertise and capabilities necessary for the effective implementation of the Convention, not least challenge inspections, investigations into alleged use and other non-routine missions. The high turnover of inspectors expected in 2023 is concerning. Sweden supports the adoption of a decision authorising the Director-General to once again rehire a group of inspectors. As a longer-term solution, it is necessary to amend the OPCW tenure policy with the goal of providing required flexibility for the benefit of the Organisation and the uninterrupted implementation of the Convention. We look forward to addressing issues related to knowledge management and the retention of expertise within the Organisation at the upcoming Fifth Review Conference.

Sweden also supports the proposed budget revision for 2023, and the use of the 2020 cash surplus to balance the costs caused by high inflation and security requirements. Being mindful that the 2020 cash surplus arose primarily due to late contributions from States Parties, we urge all States Parties to pay their share of assessed contributions in full and on time.

Women are still under-represented in all disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control fora. It is Sweden's conviction that applying a gender equality perspective to all aspects of our collective work will strengthen international peace and security. We appreciate the efforts made by the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat to enhance women's equal participation and representation among its staff. We look forward to the development of a gender and diversity strategy.

Lastly, Sweden welcomes the participation of representatives from the civil society at this Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties and regrets that not all that applied were allowed to participate. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a key role in our common efforts towards a world free from chemical weapons. It is vital that the OPCW remains true to its fundamental values of openness and transparency.

I thank you Mr Chairperson and kindly ask that this statement be issued a public document of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties and published on the OPCW external website.

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