



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

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**FRANCE**

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC TO THE  
OPCW AT THE 101ST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,  
Mr Director-General,  
Distinguished Ambassadors,

France aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. Allow me to add the following few remarks in a national capacity.

Since this is the first time that I am attending a session of the Executive Council (“the Council”) of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as the designated Permanent Representative of France to the OPCW, allow me to tell you how seriously I take the responsibility of representing my Government before this body.

As this 101st Session of the Council opens, we cannot but lament a very serious situation, on several levels.

In the strongest possible terms, France condemns Russia’s behaviour. The military invasion launched by Russia against Ukraine on 24 February is a violation of the United Nations Charter and the founding principles of the European and international order. The campaign of manipulation and disinformation that Russia has carried out in this forum completely undermines any trust or credibility that it may have had. Its repeated attacks on the OPCW Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”), aimed at undermining its impartiality, are unacceptable. In this context France reiterates its full support and confidence in the Director-General and the Secretariat of the OPCW, whose independence and impartiality are known to all.

It is with deep regret that I must also broach the subject of the Syrian chemical dossier. The Syrian regime continues to fail to meet its obligations of cooperation set out in paragraph 7 of Article VII of the Convention, to which Syria adhered, and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), which requires it to provide OPCW and United Nations personnel with immediate and unfettered access to all sites on its territory deemed to be of importance.

Syria must now comply with its international obligations in order to recover the rights and privileges that have been suspended. This means that the regime must cooperate with the OPCW actively and in good faith, and for this we count on the unequivocal mobilisation of all Member States of this Organisation, and especially those that sit on the Council. Our ultimate goal is the dismantling of the Syrian chemical arsenal to prevent any further use of these weapons. The decision taken by the Conference of the States Parties (“the Conference”) entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab



Republic” (C-25/DEC.9, dated 21 April 2021) is not irreversible, and only a credible, viable, and inclusive political solution in line with United Nations Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) can bring an end to the Syrian conflict.

The nerve agent attack perpetrated against Mr Alexei Navalny on 20 August 2020 on the territory of the Russian Federation was shocking to us all.

France shares the conclusions of several of its European partners and the Secretariat regarding the facts surrounding the poisoning with a military nerve agent belonging to the novichok group. We condemn the use of such an agent. The use of chemical weapons anywhere, anytime, by anyone, and under any circumstances is unacceptable and contravenes the international norms prohibiting the use of these weapons. Full light be shed on the circumstances of this crime and on those who perpetrated it. Those responsible must be held to account and all measures must be taken to prevent the recurrence of such attacks.

It is first and foremost the responsibility of the Russian Federation to open a credible and transparent investigation into this criminal act that occurred on its territory, against a Russian citizen, by means of an agent of the family of nerve agents developed by Russia.

This Council kicks off an important diplomatic segment: it precedes the session of the Conference in November as well as the Fifth Review Conference in May 2023, and promises rich discussions about the future of this Organisation, whose work is essential to maintaining international peace and security.

France’s support of the OPCW’s work is consistent with its long-standing and continually renewed commitment to the fight against chemical weapons. We again demonstrated it again this year by deciding to make a voluntary contribution of EUR 2.2 million in support of the Organisation’s activities in various areas.

EUR 1 million is earmarked for activities related to Syria, while EUR 500,000 has been allocated to assistance and protection measures for Ukraine within the context of the Russian military aggression. EUR 700,000 covers international cooperation and training projects, which are also essential for the future of the Organisation. These include capacity-building projects for French-speaking African countries aimed at responding to the threats from non-State actors, as well as projects at the ChemTech Centre and the organisation of a symposium on women and chemistry.

We are at a pivotal time for the Organisation. One of its initial objectives will soon be complete, with 99% of chemical weapons stockpiles declared by possessor States now destroyed. At the same time we face new threats to international security, chief among which is the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons. These challenges concern us all, and it is against this backdrop that we must think about this Fifth Review Conference, whose success depends on our collective responsibility. Accordingly, France welcomes taking active part in the preparatory work with all of the regional groups, with an open mind and in a constructive spirit, so as to chart a course for the Organisation that is adapted to the future challenges it must face.

My delegation would ask that this statement be considered as an official document of this session of the Council and that it be published on Catalyst and on the official OPCW website.

Thank you.

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