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FRANCE

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR FRANÇOIS ALABRUNE PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC TO THE OPCW AT THE
TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES
PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished Ambassadors,

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

Mr Chairperson, since this is the first time that, as Permanent Representative of France to the OPCW, I am speaking before the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Conference”), allow me to say how seriously I take the responsibility of representing my Government before this body.

First of all, France reiterates its full support and confidence in the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW (“the Secretariat”), whose professionalism and independence are exemplary. This is why France considers that Russia’s repeated attacks on the Secretariat, aimed at undermining its impartiality, just like the campaign of manipulation and disinformation that it has carried out in this forum, are unacceptable. France condemns Russia’s behaviour in the strongest possible terms.

France recalls that the military invasion launched by Russia against Ukraine on 24 February is a grave violation of the United Nations Charter.

The Syrian dossier remains at the core of this Organisation’s concerns. The Syrian regime continues to fail to meet its obligations of cooperation set out both in paragraph 7 of Article VII of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”), to which Syria adhered, and in 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.

One can only deplore the Syrian regime’s refusal to allow OPCW teams to do their work. This situation cannot stand. It is critical that the Organisation be able to carry out its missions, in line with its mandate. Attempts to interfere with the choice of inspectors, and thereby render impossible the deployment of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), are unacceptable,



Syria must now comply with its international obligations in order to recover its 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 States Parties attached to this Organisation. Our ultimate goal is the dismantling of the Syrian chemical arsenal to prevent any further use of these weapons. The Conference decision 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.

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 fight against impunity and the complete prohibition of the use of chemical weapons remain our priorities. This fight forms the foundation for the effectiveness of the prohibition regime’s credibility. This is what our continued mobilisation in support of the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons is all about.

The nerve agent attack perpetrated against Mr Alexei Navalny on 20 August 2020 on the territory of the Russian Federation shocked the international community.

France shares the conclusions of several of its European partners and the Secretariat regarding the facts surrounding the poisoning with a military nerve agent of 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.

The Conference will take a decision on the OPCW Programme and Budget. France commends the work that allowed the Executive Council (“the Council”), at its October session, to recommend the adoption of the revisions to the second year of the biennial budget of the OPCW for the year to come.

Given the context of which we are all aware, we have a responsibility to provide the Organisation with the means essential to carry out its missions, from chemical demilitarisation to the fight against re-emergence, to international cooperation.

France’s support of the OPCW’s work is consistent with its long-standing and continually renewed commitment to the fight against chemical weapons. It is to achieve these objectives that, in 2022, France made a voluntary contribution of EUR 2.2 million in support of the Organisation’s activities in various areas.

We were able to support activities related to Syria, as well as assistance and protection measures for Ukraine. We were also able to contribute to capacity-building projects for French-speaking African countries.

Accordingly, our partnership with Côte d’Ivoire to counter the threat from non-State actors, or more recently the exchange of experience and best practices at regional workshops with the

participation of French experts, in Thailand this summer and in Senegal early this month, help to strengthen Organisation's activities in pursuit of our common goals. The serious threat of use of chemical weapons, especially by non-State actors, is a major concern for many delegations, including our own. It is in our interest to work together on this subject, as the OPCW is the only appropriate forum to address the issue of chemical terrorism.

At a time when one of the initial objectives of the Convention will soon be achieved, we face new threats, with grave consequences for international peace and security. It is with this in mind that we approach the Fifth Review Conference that will take place in May 2023, the success of which depends on our collective responsibility. Accordingly, France is pleased to take active part in the preparatory work led by Ambassador Lauri Kuusing, whom I thank for his commitment. We look forward to contributing to this work and to working with all of the regional groups 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 Conference and that it be published on Catalyst and on the official OPCW website.

Thank you.

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