



Embassy of Finland
The Hague

Statement by Finland

Ambassador Ilkka-Pekka Similä
Permanent Representative of Finland to the OPCW
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Mr Chair, Mr Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Finland wishes to thank H.E. Ambassador Ziad M.D. Al Atiyah of Saudi Arabia for his efforts as the Chair of the Executive Council. I would also like to express Finland's unwavering support to the OPCW Technical Secretariat. We thank the Director-General and his staff for their dedication and determined efforts in support of the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and other tasks assigned to the Secretariat by the States Parties. We reiterate our full confidence in the expertise, professionalism, impartiality, and independence of the Secretariat. Finland remains a steadfast supporter of the Convention and the work of the OPCW to keep the world free of chemical weapons.

Finland aligns itself with the statement made by Sweden on behalf of the European Union. In addition, I wish to highlight a few issues from a national perspective.

The year 2023 will be significant for the Organization for many reasons. Over 99 percent of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles have been destroyed under the dedicated verification regime of the OPCW, and the destruction of these stockpiles is expected to come to an end in September. This year, we will also celebrate the opening and launching of activities of the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (the ChemTech Centre).

This will be an important milestone for the Organization, the Convention, and for the broader community of chemistry, science and technology. Finland wishes to commend the efforts and dedicated work of the Director-General and his team in this regard. We look forward to partaking in the activities of the ChemTech Centre.

Later this spring, the States Parties will gather for the Fifth Review Conference to take stock of the progress achieved during the past five years, and to ensure the relevance and effective implementation of the Convention. The Review Conference is an important opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the Convention.

In this context, I would like to express our gratitude and full support to the Chairperson of the Open Ended Working Group, Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia, for conducting the preparatory process in a structured, comprehensive, inclusive and transparent manner. We also appreciate the active engagement of States Parties to the preparatory process, and are encouraged to find a balanced outcome for the future of our Organization and to make an effective contribution to the global non-proliferation architecture and disarmament efforts to ensure a world free of chemical weapons.

Mr Chair,

In the early hours of 24 February 2022, Russia launched an unprovoked, unjustified brutal, full-scale invasion of its sovereign neighbouring country, Ukraine. It is appalling to see a permanent member of the UN Security Council disregard its obligations for maintaining peace and security. Finland has strongly condemned Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine from the beginning. We firmly support Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Russia must cease military operations immediately and withdraw all its armed forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine. We have firmly rejected and condemned in the strongest possible terms Russia's attempted illegal annexation of the Ukrainian regions it has occupied. We will not recognize the illegal annexation of any Ukrainian region by Russia. Accountability for Russia's brutal actions must be ensured.

We denounce Russia's engagement in disinformation campaigns spreading unsubstantiated allegations against Ukraine and others regarding chemical weapons. Ukraine is a responsible member of, and in full compliance with the Chemical weapons Convention.

Mr Chair,

Finland condemns the use of chemical weapons in all circumstances, by anyone, anywhere, and at any time.

On January 27th, the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team's third report was published. The report concludes reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Forces were the perpetrators of the chemical weapons attack on 7 April 2018 in Douma. Forty-three individuals were killed and dozens more affected by the attack. Finland condemns the attack in the strongest possible terms. Thus far, the IIT has identified the Syrian Arab Air Forces as the perpetrator of five separate chemical weapons use incidents. Previously, the 25th session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention took a decision to suspend certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic due to Syria's failure to comply with the Convention. Syria's evident pattern of non-compliance with the Convention is of grave concern and must be addressed further.

The use of chemical weapons undermines international peace and security and constitutes a violation of international law, in certain circumstances amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity. We do not tolerate impunity for the use of chemical weapons and we continue to support collective efforts to ensure accountability for perpetrators of chemical attacks. Finland yet again strongly urges the Syrian Arab Republic to immediately resolve pending issues and return to full compliance with the Convention.

Finland condemns any attacks against the legitimacy, impartiality and professionalism of any of the staff or non-routine missions of the Technical Secretariat. The Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Fact Finding Mission (FFM) and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) mandates are fully in line with the Convention, and full cooperation with them is the obligation of all States Parties. We wish to thank the IIT for their continued, dedicated efforts in investigating and identifying the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Finland is pleased to support the Secretariat's work through the Trust Fund for Syria Missions. We highly appreciate the Secretariat's work on all aspects of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

We reiterate our deep concern because the Russian Federation has not reacted to international calls for a thorough and transparent investigation into the assassination attempt of the Russian opposition politician Mr. Alexei Navalny. We once again ask the Russian Federation to provide substantial answers to the questions posed by 45 States Parties on October 2021 in the framework of Art. IX and, to disclose without further delay the circumstances of the assassination attempt against Mr. Navalny.

Mr Chair,

It is important to ensure the uninterrupted functioning of the Executive Council in the face of extraordinary circumstances. In this regard, Finland wishes to express its support to the adoption of the draft decision allowing the convening of Executive Council meetings or sessions in extraordinary circumstances.

To conclude, I wish to express our appreciation and strong support to the Director-General's efforts towards a more diverse Secretariat. We welcome and support further efforts towards gender equality in the Organization, including through enhanced gender mainstreaming in all areas of the Secretariat's work, including in capacity building and assistance activities.

I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the external server and public website.

Thank you, Mr Chair.