

**Statement of the Republic of Poland
by H.E. Ambassador Margareta Kassangana
Permanent Representative of Poland to the OPCW
at the 102nd session of the Executive Council
(The Hague, 14 - 17 March 2023)**

Mr Chairperson, Director-General, ladies and gentlemen,

Poland fully supports the European Union statement delivered by the Swedish Presidency. I wish to underline a few points from my national perspective.

First of all, let me start by congratulating the Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Ziad Al Atiyah of Saudi Arabia for steering the work of the Executive Council in a professional and effective manner.

As the new Permanent Representative of Poland to the OPCW, I would like to reiterate Poland's unwavering support for the OPCW and the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Our engagement in the area of chemical non-proliferation has been strong and I pledge to make it even stronger.

Poland highly values the leadership of Director General, H. E. Ambassador Fernando Arias as well as the work of the Technical Secretariat in ensuring that the OPCW continues to play a leading role in preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. We have full confidence in the professionalism and objectivity of the Technical Secretariat. Poland welcomes the Director General's decision to select a Polish career diplomat Mr Marcin Wróblewski as the next Director of the Office of Strategy and Policy. I am sure that he will prove himself to be a great asset for the Technical Secretariat.

It has already been more than a year since the Russian Federation started a brutal war of aggression against Ukraine. The biggest military conflict in Europe since World War II has had a profound impact on the security of the European continent and beyond. Its implications are wide and affect us all, also our work here at the OPCW. Russia's reprehensible behaviour, including drastic violation of the UN Charter and the international law and barbaric war crimes committed in Ukraine, as well as false narratives and disinformation about the possibility of use of chemical weapons by Ukraine in the conflict have destroyed the Russian Federation's international standing, questioning its role in guarding peace and security as a member of the

UN Security Council, but also as a trustworthy partner at the OPCW. I believe it is necessary to draw important conclusions here.

Regrettably, despite efforts of the international community to eradicate chemical weapons, the threat of their use continues to be real. The use of Novichok nerve agent in an assassination attempt on Mr Alexei Navalny has not been fully investigated and the perpetrators of this crime have not been brought to justice. This case remains of great concern, as well as the use of Novichok in Salisbury, UK, in 2018. There should be no impunity for the use of chemical weapons, no matter who the perpetrator is.

Another matter of our ongoing concern is a long-lasting problem of the use of chemical weapons in Syria and the credibility of its initial declaration. We support further efforts to ensure that Syria returns to full compliance with the convention. Poland welcomed the release of the third report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Forces were the perpetrators of the chemical weapons attack on 7 April 2018 in Douma, Syrian Arab Republic. We have full confidence in thoroughness and professionalism of the IIT experts and their findings and conclusions. Poland joins calls on the Russian Federation to stop shielding the Syrian regime from accountability for its use of chemical weapons, including through campaigns of disinformation. There is a clear need for a further debate among the States Parties what steps could be taken as a follow up to the third IIT report. We note the recent limited visit of the Declaration Assessment Team to Syria and call on the Syrian Arab Republic to resume full cooperation with the OPCW in order to proceed with the clarification of all outstanding matters.

When it comes to the Fifth Review Conference, in our view its outcome document should avoid any vague language allowing for reinterpretation and weakening of the existing commitments and obligations. We need to support full implementation of the Convention and make sure that the OPCW stays fit for purpose and continues to support the States Parties in line with needs and expectations. We should strengthen OPCW's capacities in verification and non-standard missions. The Organization's ability to investigate and attribute responsibility for the use of chemical weapons should be seen as an important deterrent.

Poland has been fully engaged in the work of the Open-Ended Working Group preparing the outcomes of the Fifth Review Conference. I would like to thank H.E. Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia for his leadership and personal engagement in steering the work of the OEWG in

a transparent and professional way. Since its creation, the group has covered a lot of ground when it comes to discussing expectations and priorities of States Parties towards the May Review Conference.

One of Poland's priorities for the 5th Review Conference is moving forward with the issue of chemical weapons dumped at sea. We have gone a long way in promoting the topic among the States Parties and raising awareness about the threats posed by chemical weapons dumped at sea. We support strengthening voluntary co-operation of interested States Parties on the topic and think that the OPCW and the ChemTech Centre might facilitate such co-operation by offering necessary expertise and technical advice. We are pleased that the matter has been taken on board by the EU and included into its EU Council Conclusions adopted at the end of February 2023, which outline the EU's key overall objectives for the Conference.

I would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you for your attention.