

**The 102nd Session of the Executive Council of
the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)
General Debate
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Yeondoo Jeong
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the OPCW**

14 March 2023, The Hague

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Let me express my utmost confidence that this session of the Executive Council will yield successful outcomes under the able leadership of Chairperson Ambassador Ziad M.D. Al Atiyah of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I also express my sincere appreciation to Director-General Fernando Arias and all the Technical Secretariat (TS) staff members for their endeavors to fully implement their mandates under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Mr. Chairperson,

This year is truly a critical juncture for the future of the CWC. The Fifth Review Conference this May will be a valuable opportunity to renew our joint commitment to uphold the key tasks under the Convention and reshape the way forward for the next five years. The newly established Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) will enhance the overall capacity and readiness of the OPCW and States Parties while encouraging various International Cooperation and Assistance (ICA) Activities. The elimination of all declared chemical weapons scheduled for later this year is another fruitful outcome under the Convention.

Despite these achievements and hopeful expectations, the international community still faces grave challenges in materializing a chemical weapons-free world. The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine in violation of international law and the UN Charter has significantly furthered concerns over the possibility of misuse of toxic chemicals and repeated unsubstantiated allegations about chemical provocation. The Republic of Korea underlines that the use of chemical weapons cannot be tolerated anywhere, anytime, by anyone or under any circumstances.

Mr. Chairperson,

The alleged cases of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic also remain one of the greatest concerns for all of us. Notably, we express our grave concern over the findings in the third Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) report that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force used chemical weapons in Douma in April 2018. We appreciate the utmost endeavors and professionalism of the TS to fulfill its mandate in a transparent, independent, and impartial way. We reiterate our strong support to the TS and look forward to further reports. We emphasize that all those responsible for chemical weapons use must be held accountable.

We are also deeply concerned that the cooperation between Syria and the Secretariat has seriously deteriorated and has not achieved any real progress over the year. Therefore, we strongly urge Syria to fully cooperate with the TS to redress the situation and comply with the Convention and relevant decisions by the Policy-Making Organs (PMOs).

Mr. Chairperson,

As the first State Party to have made voluntary contributions to the ChemTech Centre Project in 2017, Korea is pleased to see that the construction of the new ChemTech Centre has been successfully completed. We look forward to the inauguration ceremony on the occasion of the Fifth Review Conference. While the OPCW and States Parties have made outstanding achievements in addressing chemical threats, more robust and integrated efforts are required to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons, given the fast developments in science and technology. Korea firmly believes that the new Centre will serve as a technical hub, significantly enhancing the overall capacity of the OPCW and States Parties to address future challenges in the chemical field and facilitate the peaceful and safe use of chemicals.

Mr. Chairperson,

The experience during the global pandemic in the last few years has demonstrated the apparent need to strengthen the preparedness for unanticipated situations. The Executive Council needs contingency plans to ensure the continuation of its crucial work even when it cannot convene in-person at the OPCW Headquarters. As a co-sponsor of the draft decision, Korea reiterates its support for the decision on the convening of Executive Council meetings or sessions in extraordinary circumstances. We thank the German delegation for their tireless endeavors to achieve broad consensus on this meaningful initiative and ask all members of the Council to render their support for this vital and timely draft decision.

Mr. Chairperson,

The universal application of the CWC has been a key priority for the OPCW since its establishment. It warrants yet greater attention from all of us once all declared chemical weapons are verifiably destroyed this year, as expected. We urge the four remaining States not a party to the CWC to join it as early as possible without any preconditions in order to secure its full effectiveness. We look forward to the Secretariat's tailor-made approach to each of them and encourage it and all States Parties to redouble their multilateral and bilateral efforts to facilitate the engagement of the remaining States not a party.

Mr. Chairperson,

In addition to the stocktaking of the implementation of the Convention and related activities for the past years, the Fifth Review Conference provides a timely opportunity to present forward-looking considerations on how to address evolving challenges on the way ahead best. We welcome the valuable contribution made by the Scientific Advisory Board to this end. A more holistic approach spanning all key pillars of the Convention, ranging from a verification regime to international cooperation and assistance and organizational governance, is also essential in ensuring the comprehensive and effective implementation of the Convention for the next five years and beyond.

In particular, we have consistently emphasized that preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons and enhancing the capacity of the States Parties and the TS for this purpose are critical tasks in the future work of the OPCW. We look forward to such direction being clearly reflected in the discussions and outcomes of the Review Conference.

We also highly appreciate the remarkable leadership of the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG-RC), Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of the Republic of Estonia, for leading the discussion efficiently, transparently and inclusively. I believe we can indeed yield meaningful outcomes drawing on our collective wisdom.

Mr. Chairperson,

In closing, I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this Executive Council Session and be published on the OPCW website and external server.

Thank you. /END/