

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Dubravka Plejić Marković,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Croatia to the OPCW
at the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties
to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention
(The Hague, 15-19 May 2023)**

Agenda Item 8 - General debate

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

The Republic of Croatia aligns itself fully with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, and I would like to make the following remarks in the national capacity.

Croatia joins others in congratulating His Excellency Ambassador Van der Kwast of the Netherlands on his appointment as Chairperson of the Fifth Review Conference. Excellency, I am confident that your able leadership will help steer this session to a successful outcome, and wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Croatia also commends the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference, His Excellency Ambassador Kuusing of Estonia, for his wise and inclusive leadership in the preparatory process, and for formulating a Chairperson's Draft Provisional Text that provides a solid basis for the deliberations at the Conference.

Likewise, our thanks goes to the Director-General, His Excellency Ambassador Arias, and his highly professional team at the Technical Secretariat, for their own diligent work in the preparatory process. We reiterate our unwavering support for the Technical Secretariat's efforts aimed at achieving a world free of chemical weapons. Croatia is proud to be among the financial contributors to the newly opened ChemTech Centre, which will significantly boost the OPCW's research, operational, analytical and capacity building capabilities. We will continue to provide practical support to the Organisation, inter alia, through actively supporting the OPCW Chemical Safety and Security Programme and the OPCW Associate Programme.

Croatia remains committed to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. As a staunch proponent of a world free of chemical weapons, it condemns and rejects the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances. We have been deeply concerned about the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. There should be no impunity for the perpetrators. Croatia joins numerous repeated calls on the Syrian Arab Republic to fully comply with the Convention and disclose all details concerning its chemical weapons programme. We urge this State Party to engage constructively with the Organisation and its Technical Secretariat.

We strongly condemn Russia's use of a military-grade nerve agent against Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, UK, on 4 March 2018. It was an assault on UK sovereignty. Any such attack is a violation of the Convention and international law.

We remain deeply concerned by the fact that the Russian Federation still fails to provide credible information on the circumstances of the use of a chemical nerve agent from the novichok group in an attempt on Mr Alexei Navalny's life, in August 2020. We also find Russia's false and unfounded allegations against others, including Ukraine, a responsible State Party to the Convention, unacceptable. Once again, we condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's escalating war of aggression against this country, and reiterate our full support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as its right of self-defence.

We call on Russia to comply with international law and fulfil its commitments under the CWC.

I also take this opportunity to underscore the importance of further progress towards gender equality in the OPCW, as well as of engaging all relevant stakeholders in the work of the Organisation, including the NGOs, through their non-discriminatory participation in the Conference of the States Parties. We thank our Canadian and German colleagues for taking the lead in addressing these two important topics at the Fifth Review Conference, and are happy to be among the co-sponsors.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chair.