

**Statement on behalf of Germany by Günter Sautter,
Federal Government Commissioner for Disarmament and Arms Control,
at the General debate of the
5th Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention**

Mr Chairman, Director General, Excellencies, colleagues,

Let me first congratulate our Chairperson on his election and assure him of my delegation's full support in reaching the overarching goal of this important gathering: Together, we should provide guidance to the OPCW for the next five years and ensure that the Organization will be able to uphold effectively the global ban of chemical weapons.

The upcoming end of the destruction of the enormous stockpiles accumulated during the Cold War is a huge success for global disarmament and for the OPCW. Let me express my sincere appreciation for the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat for their highly professional work in accompanying and verifying the destruction process.

At the same time, and very regrettably, compliance challenges to the CWC have further increased since the last review conference. Syria, with Russian backing, continues to evade clarification of cases of use of chemical weapons as well as of its initial declaration and continued activities of its chemical weapons program. There can be no normalization of Syria's status in the OPCW unless it fully and verifiably complies with its CWC obligations as decided by the Conference of the States Parties. Russia continues to deny responsibility for the Novichok attacks on the Skripals and on Alexey Navalny, while ignoring all calls for investigating these cases. The overwhelming evidence points to direct responsibility of the Russian state for these attacks, implying Russian violation of its CWC obligations. Russia's persistent use of unsubstantiated claims and false accusations against Ukraine in an attempt to justify its illegal war of aggression constitutes an abuse of the Convention. The representative of the Russian Federation has just expressed his concerns regarding the integrity of the OPCW. In the light of Russia's actions in Ukraine and elsewhere, those remarks are not convincing anybody. They are cynical, misleading and destructive. It is these words and deeds which undermine the OPCW and the CWC we have all subscribed to. We must not allow this. This is our shared responsibility - at this Review Conference and beyond. Let's live up to it!

In addition to these extremely worrisome developments, we will also have to address rising challenges by non-state actors. Our support to States Parties in their national implementation of the CWC must continue. In this context, capacity building and international cooperation will remain high on the OPCW's agenda.

Confronted with all these challenges, the OPCW must remain fully prepared to assume its responsibilities, to investigate alleged use, conduct challenge inspections and render technical assistance. Valuable expertise gained in the Syrian investigations should be retained. For all these purposes, the impressive new ChemTechCentre constitutes a very important asset. Germany will contribute to exploiting the Centre's full potential.

Two other subjects require this Conference's attention on which my country has made specific proposals. We believe it is necessary to review the system of industry verification, to ensure it can continue to fulfil its objectives against the background of a rapidly developing

global chemical industry. We also believe that civil society support in implementing the CWC is essential and that the OPCW should increase its dialogue and cooperation with civil society.

Let me end by stressing that Germany remains strongly committed to upholding the norm against the use of chemical weapons and to fight against their re-emergence. We are ready at this Conference to work hard towards a forward-looking outcome document, which should set us on course for winning this fight and significantly strengthen the CWC and its full implementation.

Thank you.