

## LITHUANIA

### STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR NEILAS TANKEVIČIUS PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA TO THE OPCW AT THE 5TH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

Mr. Chairperson,

Mr. Director-General,

Distinguished delegates,

Representatives of chemical industry and civil society,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Republic of Lithuania warmly congratulates Ambassador Henk-Cor van der Kwast for his election as the Chairperson of the Fifth Review Conference and would like to assure of our full support during the Conference.

I would also like to pay tribute to Ambassador Lauri Kuusing, Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group for his outstanding work during the preparatory process that provided us with a solid and balanced basis for an outcome document of this conference, that will strengthen the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and future work of the OPCW.

Lithuania fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by Ambassador Marjolijn van Deelen, Special Envoy for Disarmament and non-proliferation at EEAS on behalf of the European Union, and I would like to make the following remarks in the national capacity.

Mr. Chairperson,

Last year we marked the 25th anniversary of the entry-into-force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is a key instrument of disarmament and non-proliferation. We are almost past destruction of the last stockpiles of declared chemical weapons, but we must remain vigilant in safeguarding the global norm against the use of chemical weapons and countering their re-emergence. The use or threat of use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time, and under any circumstances is unacceptable. As there can be no impunity for chemical weapons use, those responsible for such acts must and will be held accountable.

Since the last Review Conference, Russia has refused to comply with almost all of its arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation obligations, including commitments related to the proliferation and use of the weapons of mass destruction. Russia, the country responsible for the ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine and carrying out deliberate violations of International Law and International Humanitarian Law in Ukraine, also has a track record in the use of chemical weapons in assassinations and assassination attempts. After using a nerve agent of the "Novichok" group on its own soil against Alexey Navalny in 2020, Russia still has not provided any substantive answers to the questions posed by 45 States Parties under Article IX. We reiterate our demand that Russia complies with all its obligations under International Law, including the CWC.

Mr. Chairperson,

Lithuania fully supports the work of the Technical Secretariat (TS) and underscores its professionalism and impartiality in carrying out investigations in the past decade. We also value timely and efficient response from the TS and States Parties to Ukraine's requests for assistance and protection, as provided for under the Convention. We condemn all attempts to challenge the credibility of the TS.

The last report by the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), published on 27 January 2023, provided evidence that the Syrian Arab Air Forces carried out a chemical weapons attack in Douma in 2018. Report also explicitly mentions the military and diplomatic support provided to the Syrian regime by Russia in the run up to the attack. This report marked the ninth instance of chemical weapons use independently attributed to the Syrian regime by the UN and OPCW mechanisms. We condemn in the strongest terms the Syrian regime's repeated use of these horrific weapons and reiterate our demand for Syria to immediately comply with its obligations under the CWC, fully declare and destroy its chemical weapons programme and allow the deployment of OPCW staff to Syria to verify it has done so.

Mr. Chairperson,

Lithuania welcomes the timely inauguration of the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology, which will play a pivotal role in the implementation of the Convention and addressing future challenges. One such challenge may be chemical weapons dumped at sea. Together with Bulgaria, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lebanon, Mexico, Poland, Romania and Ukraine we are encouraging all interested States Parties, on a voluntary basis, to discuss and cooperate on the potential risks, including those associated with elimination efforts, through the exchange of expertise and best practices, sharing of information, and raising awareness of initiatives among States Parties, international organisations, academia, civil society, and relevant industries. We also encourage the Technical Secretariat to maintain its knowledge on chemical weapons dumped at sea, and, if requested, support voluntary consultations and cooperation among States Parties on the topic and offer technical advice and expertise in accordance with the provisions of the Convention.

We ask that this statement be made an official document of the Review Conference and published on the external server and the public website of the OPCW.