

**Statement by H.E. Mrs. Aiga Liepiņa**  
**Permanent Representative of the Republic of Latvia to the Organisation for the**  
**Prohibition of Chemical Weapons**  
**at the 5<sup>th</sup> Review Conference of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical**  
**Weapons Convention**  
**15-19 May 2023**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Director General,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to congratulate Ambassador Henk-Cor van der Kwast for his election as the Chairperson of the Fifth Review Conference, and express my delegation's full support and cooperation throughout this session. Latvia expresses gratitude to Ambassador Lauri Kuusing, Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group for steering the work in a transparent and inclusive manner, and for preparing a good basis for the Chairperson's Draft Provisional Text.

Latvia aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and would like to make the following remarks in a national capacity.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) constitutes an important element of the global architecture of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. The full and effective implementation of the CWC contributes to international peace and security. Unfortunately, in recent years we have witnessed an alarming increase of cases of confirmed incidents of chemical weapons use. Therefore, the 5<sup>th</sup> Review Conference is the right occasion to consider ways on how to strengthen international norms prohibiting chemical weapons.

The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances is a violation of international law and can amount to the most serious of international crimes – war crimes and crimes against humanity. Those identified responsible for these reprehensible acts must and will be held accountable.

Comprehensive and thorough investigations by the OPCW have concluded that Syria has repeatedly used chemical weapons over the past years, causing human casualties. Latvia reiterates its call to Syria to comply with the provisions of the CWC. Syria must fully declare and destroy its chemical weapons program and accept the deployment of the OPCW Technical Secretariat staff. Latvia deplores the Russian Federation's disinformation campaign to shield Syria from accountability for its use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Chairperson,

Russia's unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine constitutes a gross violation of international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter. Latvia

strongly condemns Russia's aggression and demands that Russia withdraws all forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has been accompanied by a targeted disinformation campaign falsely accusing Ukraine of using or preparing to use chemical substances in Ukraine. Over the course of last few months there have been many occasions when the Russian Federation used the framework of international institutions, including the OPCW and the UN to spread baseless allegations to discredit Ukraine's standing as a country that fully complies with its obligations under the CWC. Latvia deplores all of these Russian disinformation efforts.

Latvia remains concerned that the Russian Federation has not responded to calls by the international community, including the European Union for a thorough and transparent investigation into the assassination attempt on the Russian opposition politician Mr. Alexei Navalny who was poisoned in Russia by a military chemical nerve agent of the "Novichok" group in August 2020. Impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not be tolerated. It is important that those responsible for the assassination attempt on Mr. Navalny have to be brought to justice.

Mr. Chairperson,

We live in very dynamic and challenging times, which requires us to ensure that the OPCW remains fit for purpose to respond to various challenges. The OPCW needs to be equipped to address new and emerging threats such as the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors. It is important for the OPCW to take into account the latest developments in science and technology. The inauguration of the new Center for Chemistry and Technology will significantly help to ensure a more effective implementation of the CWC by fostering synergies between verification, training and capacity building efforts. The OPCW's physical infrastructure should be strengthened to make it more resilient against possible cyber-attacks thus safeguarding the Organisation's integrity and independent work.

Latvia recognizes the importance of achieving gender equality, diversity, and inclusivity within the Technical Secretariat. A greater diversity of views within the Technical Secretariat would lead to informed decision-making.

Latvia is convinced about the relevance of engaging all relevant stakeholders, including the chemical industry, think tanks, civil society, and non-governmental organizations, in the work of the OPCW. Latvia sees the merit to review the existing guidelines to ensure broadest possible and non-discriminatory participation by NGOs in the Conference of States Parties.

Mr. Chairperson,

We would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document of the Review Conference and publish it on the external server and the public website of the OPCW.

Thank you.