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**LATVIA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR AIGA LIEPIŅA  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA TO THE  
OPCW AT THE 102ND SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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

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

The international rules-based order whose integral part is the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture has been significantly endangered by the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine. By invading Ukraine, Russia has brought severe damage to global security. Russia's illegal military actions, war crimes committed against the Ukrainian population and continuous destruction of civilian infrastructure constitute a gross violation of international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter. Latvia strongly condemns Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine and demands that Russia withdraws all forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. All Russian allegations falsely accusing Ukraine of using or preparing to use chemical agents in Ukraine have not been substantiated by concrete evidence and consequently can be interpreted as yet another example of Russia's disinformation campaign.

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 must be brought to justice.

Latvia welcomes the publication of the third report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) on 27 January 2023. The report concludes that there are reasonable grounds to believe that on 7 April 2018 in the Syrian town of Douma, the Syrian Arab Air Force used chlorine during a military attack, causing 43 human casualties and affecting dozens more. Latvia strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Army and demands that the Syrian regime, without delay, complies with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons



Convention and respective UN Security Council resolutions. Syria must fully declare and destroy its chemical weapons programme 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.

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.

Latvia agrees that the upcoming Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Fifth Review Conference) will be an appropriate occasion to consider ways on how to strengthen international norms prohibiting chemical weapons. Latvia supports efforts by the Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia for steering the work of the Open-Ended Working Group towards gathering multiple views with a goal of building consensus.

To conclude, Latvia would like to take this opportunity to express gratitude to the Director-General for heading the Organisation and ensuring the implementation of the Convention during these challenging times. Latvia reiterates its full confidence in the Technical Secretariat's professionalism and impartiality.

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

Thank you.

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