



STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CONSUELO FEMENIA
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SPAIN TO THE OPCW
AT THE 103rd SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(The Hague, 11 - 14 July 2023)

Agenda item 7 (e) - Addressing the threat from chemical weapons use – Ukraine and Navalny

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the European Union general statement we reiterated our resolute condemnation of Russia's unjustified, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms.

Russia's reckless military attacks on and around industrial chemical facilities constitute a direct threat to the civilian population and to the environment. We urgently repeat our call upon Russia to immediately stop the shelling of civilian infrastructure. We are particularly concerned by recent reports regarding the use of riot control agents by Russia as a method of warfare. Such use is prohibited under Article I of the Convention. We ask Russia to respond to the Note Verbale sent by the Embassy of Ukraine in the Netherlands on 28 May 2023, as well as to media reports, including reports by Russian state media, on the use of riot control agents in combat by Russian forces. We repeat our call on Russia to strictly comply with its obligations under the Convention.

It is well established that Ukraine is a responsible member of the Chemical Weapons Convention and in full compliance with it. Nevertheless, Russia has, as part of its aggression against Ukraine, engaged in a campaign of disinformation and state-controlled propaganda by spreading unsubstantiated and unfounded allegations against Ukraine and others regarding chemical weapons.

Let us recall that Russia, the country responsible for the ongoing war and for serious violations of international law and international humanitarian law in Ukraine, has a track record of the use of chemical weapons in assassinations and assassination attempts as well as in sowing disinformation.

Mr. Chairperson,

Addressing the threat of chemical weapons use lies at the core of the Convention and is essential for upholding international legal norms. The European Union has condemned the assassination attempt on the Russian opposition politician Mr. Alexei Navalny in the strongest possible terms. His poisoning in Russia in August 2020 by a nerve agent of the “Novichok” group (a substance developed by Russia), has been confirmed, beyond doubt, by specialised laboratories in Germany, France and Sweden, as well as by the OPCW. Russia has been refusing to seriously investigate the poisoning, which was stated also by the European Court of Human Rights in its decision of 6 June 2023.

We once again call on the Russian Federation to provide substantial answers to the questions posed by 45 States Parties in the framework of Art. IX, paragraph 2 of the Convention on 5 October 2021, and allow a thorough and transparent international investigation into the assassination attempt without further delay.

Impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not and will not be tolerated. Those responsible for the assassination attempts must be brought to justice. Since 2020, the European Union has imposed restrictive measures under its chemical weapons sanctions regime against fourteen Russian individuals and one entity responsible for inducing and providing support to the poisoning of Mr. Alexei Navalny with the toxic nerve agent “Novichok”. Those designated are subject to an assets freeze and a travel ban preventing them from entering or transiting through EU territories. Previously, the European Union has introduced sanctions on four senior officials from the Russian military intelligence service involved in the poisonings with “Novichok” in Salisbury in 2018.

The Candidate Countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro and Ukraine as well as the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the EEA (European Economic Area) align themselves with this statement. Andorra, Monaco and San Marino also associate themselves with this statement.

I would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document of the 103rd Session of the Executive Council and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you.

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