

**The 103rd Session of the Executive Council of
the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)
General Debate
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Hyoung-chan Choe
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the OPCW**

11 July 2023, The Hague

Mr. Chair,
Mr. Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Let me begin by congratulating Ambassador Lucian Fatu of Romania on assuming the Chairpersonship of the Executive Council. I trust that we will achieve successful outcomes under your outstanding leadership for the coming year. I assure you of my delegation's full support.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Director-General Fernando Arias and all the members of the Technical Secretariat (TS) for their tireless efforts to thoroughly implement their mandates under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

As this is the first time for me to take the floor at the Executive Council Meeting, I would also like to express my gratitude for the warm welcome by the Chairperson, the Director-General and members of the Council. I look forward to working with all of you in contributing to the successful work of the Council.

Mr. Chair,

The Fifth Review Conference held this May was a valuable opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to fully implement the Convention and chart an ambitious path to the realization of a world free of chemical weapons. It is regrettable that we were not able to adopt a final outcome document. Nonetheless, I believe that our in-depth discussions during the Conference on all key pillars of the Convention such as verification, international cooperation and assistance (ICA), and organizational governance, provided a solid basis for future progress. My delegation looks forward to the proceeding with our work on the actionable matters at the Executive Council.

Mr. Chair,

Few days ago, we just reached the historic milestone of full elimination of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles which was originally scheduled later this year. We welcome the tremendous efforts made by the organisation, diplomats and experts. While celebrating this critical step, we look forward to taking actions to address remaining challenges, including achieving the universal adherence to the Convention, as highlighted by the Director General.

Convinced that universality is critical to guarantee the full implementation of the CWC, the Republic of Korea urges the four remaining States to join the Convention as soon as possible without preconditions. We look to the TS to strengthen its efforts to encourage the engagement of the four States.

Mr. Chair,

The Republic of Korea also reiterates its unfaltering position that any use of chemical weapons cannot be tolerated and those responsible for such use must be held accountable. In this regard, we are deeply concerned at the TS report that consultations between Syria and the Technical Secretariat to clarify the initial declaration and investigate alleged incidents of use of chemical weapons in its territory are still being hampered. My delegation reaffirms its unwavering support for the ongoing work of the TS including the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), and the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), which are implementing their mandates in a transparent, independent, and impartial way. We strongly urge Syria to fully cooperate with the TS to redress the situation and comply with the Convention and relevant decisions by the Policy-Making Organs (PMOs).

The war in Ukraine has also deepened concerns over the possibility of misuse of toxic chemicals and the use of riot control agents as a method of warfare. We request that the Secretariat continue to closely monitor the situation in Ukraine and remain vigilant to address any possible use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Chair,

The new ChemTech Centre (CCT), which was launched on the occasion of the 5th Review Conference, well demonstrates our strong aspiration for a technical hub to significantly bolster the capacity of the OPCW and all States Parties. I am confident that the CCT will provide a unique venue to further enhance the OPCW's research and analytical capabilities

and facilitate the peaceful and safe use of chemicals. The Republic of Korea will continue its wholehearted support for the successful operation of the CCT including by contributing to new projects.

My government has consistently put great importance on enhancing capacity-building activities at the regional level for national and regional chemical emergency readiness within the framework of the Article X of the Convention.

In this context, Korea co-hosted with the TS the 2023 Regional Training Cycle on Assistance and Protection for First Responders in the Asian region in Seoul. The regional capacity building program held in June provided training for countermeasures against chemical incidents as well as facilitated the exchange of information and experiences among regional experts. We will continue our support to strengthen regional capabilities to prevent chemical incidents and foster the safe use of chemicals through hosting regional training program as well as Seoul Workshop on the Peaceful Development and Use of Chemistry for States Parties in the Asian Region.

Mr. Chair,

In closing, I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this Executive Council Session and be published on the OPCW website and external server.

Thank you. /END/