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ALBANIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ADIA SAKIQI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA TO THE
OPCW AT THE FIFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE
STATES PARTIES TO REVIEW THE OPERATION OF THE CHEMICAL
WEAPONS CONVENTION**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Representatives of chemical industry and civil society,
Dear ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the Republic of Albania.

Albania aligns with the statement of the European Union and in its national capacity would like to reiterate the following.

Albania would like to congratulate H.E. Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast on his election as the Chairperson of the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Fifth Review Conference). We wish the Chairperson every success in his leadership. Please rest assured of Albania's support.

It goes without saying that a successful Review Conference is the result of solid preparatory work. Albania would like to commend the leadership, work and dedication of the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group H.E. Ambassador Lauri Kuusing, in putting before us, after lots of work and inclusive consultations, the Chairperson's draft provisional text. Thank you, H.E. Ambassador Kuusing.

Albania is a staunch supporter of the OPCW and its noble, and nevertheless challenging mission to free the world of chemical weapons. Moreover, in its capacity as a non-permanent member of United Nations Security Council 2022-2023, Albania would like to stress its support to this Organisation as it is voiced unequivocally by the United Nations General Assembly in resolutions adopted in October 2022 and February 2023.

The fight to rid the world of chemical weapons is ongoing. Chemical weapons use is a clear and continuous threat which we as States Parties to OPCW should make sure it ceases to occur. This is also the 'raison d'être' of this Organisation. That is why we keep on working each and every day. The Republic of Albania would like to reiterate the mantra of the OPCW, and state time and again Albania's commitment to the obligation as a State Party to the OPCW - the use



of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time, and under any circumstances is unacceptable, and those responsible for its use must and will be held accountable.

The Fifth Review Conference is a timely opportunity to reiterate Albania's position vis-à-vis the chemical weapons use by the Syrian Arab Republic. Comprehensive and careful investigations conducted by distinguished bodies of UN and OPCW have come to the shocking conclusion that Syria has repeatedly used chemical weapons over the past years, causing numerous victims. Primarily and most importantly, Albania strongly condemns these heinous acts. It also strongly condemns the continuous attempts of the Syrian regime to hide such shocking practices. Furthermore, it condemns the successful attempts of Syria, so far, to hinder thorough investigations. We urge again Syria to respect and comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention, to declare and destroy its chemical weapons arsenal and not to hinder OPCW technical teams to carry out their verification missions. Aiding Syria to shy away from accountability, a practice employed by the Russian Federation is also unacceptable. Albania urges the Russian Federation not to use disinformation practices, doing so with regards to such dangerous and lethal weapons is deplorable to say the least.

Albania joins the European Union's calls on the Russian Federation to provide explanations and replies to the questions of 45 State Parties under Article IX. There is already much delay in addressing these questions, and yet transparency and cooperation in these matters, such as on the use of the dangerous chemical nerve agent from the novichok group on the opposition leader of the Russian Federation. Addressing such questions are obligations under the Convention which the Russian Federation should respect. Albania condemns the usage of such nerve agents anytime, anywhere, by anyone.

We are facing an unprecedented aggression from Russia in Ukraine, both States Parties to this Organisation. This war of aggression against Ukraine is a manifest violation of the United Nations Charter and international law. Albania repeatedly condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's aggression and calls on Russia to withdraw all its troops, proxies and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

The Fifth Review Conference is a timely opportunity to make OPCW an able Organisation to address the challenges of the future, as the forthcoming implementation of the Convention faces multiple challenges. These are necessary requirements of the times we live in, of the developments in technology and science. That is why the Convention verification regime needs to be updated to be in line with modern industry. The report of the Scientific Advisory Board is a case in point which needs to be internalised. In the same vein, Albania supports the amendments to the OPCW's tenure policy to ensure that the required and necessary knowledge is not lost.

Albania is a co-sponsor of the paper submitted by Canada on gender equality and diversity in the Convention context and wants to emphasise herein the importance of achieving gender equality, diversity, and inclusivity within the Organisation. Albania also is glad to support the continued efforts towards geographical diversity, in full compliance with Article VIII of the Convention.

Albania is co-sponsor of the joint statement, submitted by Germany, entitled 'Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organisations and their Inclusion in the Work of the OPCW, Including their Attendance of Sessions of the Conference of the States Parties'. The fight to rid the world of chemical weapons is a common fight which cannot be won if active and dedicated

non-governmental organisations are excluded. Albania supports transparency and broad participation of such important players in this common fight.

Mr Chairperson, finally, we are all glad and very proud of the technological milestone achieved by this Organisation, which inaugurated the ChemTech Centre only last week. Albania shares in the belief and is enthused by such an innovative development which will contribute to make the OPCW fit for purpose to ably and professionally face the challenges of the future with precision and advanced scientific skills.

We would like to submit this statement as an official document of the Fifth Review Conference and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

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