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FINLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ILKKA-PEKKA SIMILÄ
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FINLAND 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,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Finland warmly congratulates H.E. Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast for 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) of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We would also like to pay tribute to H.E. Ambassador Lauri Kuusing, Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group.

We reiterate our full support to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Finland has full confidence in the technical expertise, professionalism, independence, and impartiality of the Technical Secretariat in carrying out its important mandate.

Finland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. We wish to highlight a few topics of particular importance to Finland.

The Fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention takes place in a context where the arms control, disarmament and weapons of mass destruction non-proliferation architecture is increasingly undermined. In this Review Conference, we should commit to strengthen the Convention and its implementation.

Last year marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry-into-force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, yet chemical weapons continue to pose a grave threat to international peace and security. Finland condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons in all circumstances, by anyone, anywhere, and at any time. The use of chemical weapons undermines international peace and security and constitutes a violation of international law, in certain circumstances amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity. We do not tolerate impunity for the use of chemical weapons, and we continue to support collective efforts to ensure accountability for perpetrators of chemical attacks, including through the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.



The OPCW Investigation and Identification Team's third report found the Syrian regime responsible for the deadly chemical weapons attack on Douma in April 2018. This report marks the ninth instance of chemical weapons use independently attributed to the Syrian regime by the United Nations and the OPCW.

Syria must fully declare and destroy its chemical weapons stockpiles and programme and allow unhindered access of the OPCW Technical Secretariat to verify that it has done so. This Review Conference must reiterate that Syria has repeatedly used chemical weapons over the past years and failed to comply with its obligations under the Convention.

We reiterate our deep concern because the Russian Federation has not reacted to international calls for a thorough and transparent investigation into the assassination attempt of the Russian opposition politician Mr Alexei Navalny. We once again ask the Russian Federation to provide substantial answers to the questions posed by 45 States Parties in October 2021 in the framework of Article IX and, to disclose without further delay the circumstances of the assassination attempt against Mr Navalny.

In February 2022, Russia launched an unprovoked, unjustified brutal, full-scale invasion of its sovereign neighbouring country, Ukraine. It is appalling to see a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council disregard its obligations for maintaining peace and security. Finland has strongly condemned Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine from the beginning. We firmly support Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Russia must cease military operations immediately and withdraw all its armed forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine. We have firmly rejected and condemned, in the strongest possible terms, Russia's attempted illegal annexation of the Ukrainian regions it has occupied. We will not recognise the illegal annexation of any Ukrainian region by Russia. Accountability for Russia's brutal actions must be ensured.

We denounce Russia's engagement in disinformation campaigns spreading unsubstantiated allegations against Ukraine and others regarding chemical weapons. Ukraine is a responsible Member of, and in full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, VERIFIN, has offered training for experts and chemists from developing countries already since 1990. To date over 1,800 trainees from 141 countries have participated in various training courses at VERIFIN. In the trainings, female participants are preferred whenever possible in line with the Finnish Development Policy. Courses are provided mainly in the analysis of chemical warfare related chemicals from environmental and biomedical samples, but also on the activities of National Authorities in implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Finland welcomes the inauguration of the new OPCW laboratory - the ChemTech Centre. The centre will play an essential role in the implementation of the Convention by leveraging synergies between verification, training, and capacity-building efforts. Finland believes that promotion of chemical forensics is an important aspect of strengthening verification and ensuring accountability in future years.

I wish to express our appreciation and strong support to the Director-General's efforts towards a more diverse Secretariat. We welcome and support further efforts towards gender equality in the Organisation, including through enhanced gender mainstreaming in all areas of the Secretariat's work, including in capacity building and assistance activities.

Finland remains a strong advocate of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We condemn all attempts to impede the OPCW Technical Secretariat's crucial work or to challenge its credibility. We will continue to offer our support and expertise to the OPCW also in the future.

To conclude, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Fifth Review Conference and published on the OPCW website and external server.

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