



STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CONSUELO FEMENIA
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SPAIN TO THE OPCW
AT THE 104th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(The Hague, 10 - 13 October 2023)

Agenda item 6: General debate

Mr. Chairperson,

Director-General,

Distinguished delegates,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU).

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.

The European Union would like to thank the Chairperson, H.E. Lucian Fătu of Romania, for his wise and able stewardship of the Executive Council, and assure him of our full support in conducting the work of the 104th session.

We also commend the leadership of OPCW Director General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, and reiterate our full confidence in the OPCW Technical Secretariat (TS), its professionalism,

impartiality and well-established technical expertise in implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and tasks assigned by the States Parties.

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union reiterates its resolute condemnation in the strongest possible terms of Russia's unjustified, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a flagrant violation of the UN Charter and international law as well as OSCE principles and commitments. Russia's brutal war, which has lasted 20 months, has brought not only immense suffering and destruction to Ukraine and its people but also negative global consequences. We resolutely support Ukraine, the victim of Russia's unprovoked aggression, in its inherent right to self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter.

We repeat our call on Russia and its political leadership to stop its war of aggression and to immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all its troops, proxies and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. Russia bears the full responsibility for this act of aggression and all the destruction and loss of life it causes. Russia, its leadership, those responsible and their accomplices must be held accountable for their actions.

The European Union remains concerned about a growing number of reports regarding the alleged use of riot control agents by Russia as a method of warfare. Such use is prohibited under Article I of the Convention. We call on Russia to strictly comply with its obligations under the Convention and to comment on the reports. In the same vein, the European Union once again urges 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 to disclose without further delay the circumstances of the assassination attempt against Mr. Navalny.

Chemical weapons use has been independently attributed to the Syrian regime by the UN and the OPCW on nine occasions. The European Union condemns in the strongest possible terms the Syrian regime's repeated use of these horrific weapons. Syria must fully declare and destroy its chemical weapons program and allow the unfettered access of OPCW staff to verify it has done so, in accordance with its obligations under UN Resolution 2118 and the CWC. In the

latest report by the Director-General (EC-104/DG.4 of 24 August 2023), there is no progress reported to the Executive Council in any of the open issues.

Mr. Chairperson,

The OPCW needs a predictable and solid financial base to be able to meet States Parties' expectations regarding its programmatic work in support of the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. At the same time, under the currently challenging financial conditions, the Technical Secretariat is required to continue to practice strict budgetary discipline. The revised draft bi-annual programme and budget for 2024-25 to be approved by the Executive Council and adopted by the CSP-28 must ensure the necessary funding for the OPCW to continue its vital work including inspections, international cooperation and assistance, while proactively decreasing expenditure where possible. This responsible approach should also be applied to the use of extrabudgetary funding by the Secretariat. In this context, we call on States Parties to meet their obligations and pay their assessed contributions in full and on time. For its part, the European Union will continue to support the work of the Organisation with voluntary funding worth EUR 5,350.000 until 2026. This contribution will help finance key activities such as capacity building and laboratory twinning as well as the organisation of the first Table-Top Exercise (TTX) on chemical terrorism.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Convention's continued vitality and the preservation of the global norm against the use of chemical weapons is more important than ever in the current security environment. The Convention will remain a fundamental component of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The EU and its Member States are committed to continuing the work on all actionable items discussed at the Fifth Review Conference, such as tenure policy, geographical diversity, gender equality and mainstreaming, NGO participation and industry verification in parallel.

More specifically on geographical diversity, we expect the Working Group to consider measures in full respect of Art. VIII of the Convention. This workstrand is closely connected to making progress in the facilitation for adapting the current Tenure Policy. It is also

important that States Parties intensify their efforts to present qualified candidates for OPCW vacancies.

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

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