



**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JURAJ MACHÁČ,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC
TO THE OPCW,
AT THE 28th SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES
(The Hague, 27 November – 1 December 2023)
*General Debate***

Slovakia aligns itself with the statement delivered by H.E. Consuelo Femenía, Permanent Representative of Spain to the OPCW, on behalf of the Member States of the European Union and partner countries.

In my national capacity, I wish to make the following comments and observations.

I shall commence by highlighting and commending the extraordinary professionalism, impartiality and determination by the Director-General and the staff of the Technical Secretariat to fulfil the mandate of the Organisation despite pressure of financial or other nature.

I would also like to extend the appreciation to all involved in the preparation of this session, especially to H.E. Vusimuzi Philemon Madonsela, the Chairperson of the 27th session of the Conference, H.E. Suljuk Mustansar Tarar, the Chairperson-nominee of the 28th session of the Conference and, last but not least, the staff of the Technical Secretariat under the able leadership of the Director-General.

The OPCW is a knowledge-based organisation. Therefore, with view to rapid scientific developments, including in the field of chemistry, it is indispensable that the Organisation is equipped to meet all requirements. The Centre for Chemistry and Technology, which had been inaugurated in May this year, is a tangible manifestation of the ambition and ability of the OPCW to keep pace with scientific developments. Slovakia is proud to have financially contributed to the construction of the ChemTech Centre.

Having said that, it is the staff of the Organisation that, by their dedicated day-to-day work, make the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention become a reality. However, by applying a strict tenure policy, it is increasingly challenging to retain the necessary talent at the OPCW. Therefore, we fully support the revision of the tenure policy, as described in the tabled draft decision.

Now, after some positive elements, I have to turn to the problematic areas.

Three main issues continue to overshadow the work of the Organisation, whereby the common thread is the lack of compliance with international law generally and the CWC specifically.

First and foremost, the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine – which we condemn in the strongest terms – is a flagrant violation of the most basic principles and rules of international law.

Secondly, after the start of the armed conflict, the Russian Federation has repeatedly disseminated unfounded allegations on chemical provocations allegedly to be carried out by Ukraine. In this regard, we point to the track record of the Russian Federation in the field of use of chemical weapons. It contains the assassination attempts on Mr Alexei Navalny and on Sergey and Yulia Skripal, both by deploying a military-grade nerve agent of the *Novichok* group.

More recently, information has surfaced on the use of riot control agents during the armed conflict in Ukraine by Russian forces, in contravention of the CWC. In all these instances, the Russian Federation has failed to provide necessary clarifications, in line with its obligations under the CWC. We have, therefore, strong doubts, if Russia is in the right position to call out other countries. We would rather welcome proper co-operation by Russia in the cases where it is itself implicated, to uncover the whole truth about them.

Thirdly, Slovakia regrets that the Syrian Arab Republic continues its uncooperative approach and still fails to fulfil all its obligations stemming from the Chemical Weapons Convention and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, most notably resolution 2118. Proper cooperation by the Syrian authorities is even more necessary considering the alarming findings contained in the Third Report of the IIT. We condemn the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian army, as verified by the solid and well-reasoned findings of the IIT and reiterate our call on all States to strictly respect the obligation not to use chemical weapons. In this regard, the draft decision on Syria – which Slovakia has co-sponsored – is a very pertinent reminder of the troubling actions of Syria, while containing important elements with view to achieving the goals of the CWC.

I wish to kindly request the issuance of this statement as an official-series document of the session, as well as its posting on the OPCW public website.

I thank you.