



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JOŽEF DROFENIK, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SLOVENIA TO THE OPCW AT THE 28TH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

General Debate

Mr. Chairperson, Director-General, distinguished delegates,

Let me first join others in thanking the chairpersons of the 27th session of the Conference and of the Executive Council, Ambassadors Vusimuzi Madonsela of South Africa and Lucian Fătu of Romania for their efforts in guiding our work. We wish Ambassador Suljuk Mustansar Tarar of Pakistan every success in the steering of the 28th session of the Conference. Rest assured, Sir, of our full support.

In addition to the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, I would like to offer a few remarks in my national capacity.

Firstly, we congratulate the United States and the OPCW for the completion of the destruction of the last stockpiles of declared chemical weapons earlier this year. That is a remarkable achievement that both States Parties and the organization can be proud of.

Regrettably, we must also conclude that while declared stockpiles have been verifiably destroyed, some States Parties appear to have retained, in secret, parts of their chemical weapons programmes.

We are particularly troubled by the many unanswered questions regarding chemical weapons in Syria, which strongly indicate that Syria has retained a part of its chemical weapons programme, in violation of the CWC. What is more, international investigative bodies have confirmed the use of chemical weapons by Syrian forces in nine instances since Syria's accession to the CWC. This is unacceptable. We continue to call on Syria to comply with its obligations under the Convention, declare all its chemical weapons production and research activities, destroy any remaining secret caches, and fully cooperate with the OPCW. It is also imperative that those responsible for chemical weapons use are brought to justice.

Meanwhile, Russian forces waging a war of aggression on Ukraine are bragging on their national television about "smoking out" opponents with tear gas. Let's recall that using riot control agents as a method of warfare is expressly prohibited under Article 1, paragraph 5 of the Convention. We call on Russia to ensure that this prohibition is fully respected.

Also worrying is the use of small scale chemical weapons for targeted attacks on individuals, such as in the Skripal and Navalny cases, and the risk of proliferation exacerbated by new technologies.

Because of these concerns, it is crucial that the OPCW remains capable of delivering on its mandate. In order to deliver, the organization must have at its disposal adequate funding to

carry out its functions. My delegation will therefore support the draft programme and budget for the coming bi-annum, and we call on others to do the same.

On a more positive note, we're pleased that we have been able to make good progress on some good governance issues considered during the 5th Review Conference – we look forward to the consensual adoption of the decisions ensuring broader geographic diversity in the Secretariat staff and a more flexible tenure policy. We also welcome the progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the work of the organization, as well as the ongoing consultations on closer cooperation with civil society organizations.

Mr. Chairperson,

Another task awaits us this week. We are called upon to elect members of the Executive Council for the coming two years. In the EEG, four candidates present themselves for three seats. Allow me to highlight a few important considerations in this regard:

1. There is no such thing as a permanent seat on the Executive Council.
2. The Convention is clear: members from a certain region are to be designated by State Parties located in this region. The overwhelming majority of the EEG has a clear preference and is supporting the candidacies of Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine.
3. In designating these members, the regional group is to take into account "other regional factors". One candidate waging a war of aggression against another is a regional factor that cannot be overlooked.
4. This election is inherently a political choice. A choice between an aggressor state with a record of breaking international law, who is - according to its own troops – violating the Convention by deploying riot control agents as a method of warfare. Or, a choice for three democratic countries with an excellent record of supporting the Convention. The credibility of the Executive Council and of this organization is at stake.

Before ceding the floor, I would like to express our deepest sympathies with all who have lost loved ones in the current conflict in the Middle East. Slovenia continues to call for a ceasefire and for full respect for international humanitarian law, while advocating for a two-state solution as the only path to sustainable peace in the region.

Let me conclude by reiterating our thanks and trust in the Director-General Arias and his staff. Rest assured of Slovenia's continued support and cooperation.

I ask that this statement be considered as an official document, and posted on Catalyst and the OPCW public website.

Thank you.