



**Permanent Representation
of Ukraine to the OPCW**

English

Item 8: General debate

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Oleksandr Karasevych
during the 28th Conference of States Parties
(November 27 - December 1, 2023)**

Mr. Chairperson,

Mr. Director-General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ambassadors and Delegates,

First of all, allow me to express gratitude to H.E. Mr. Vusimuzi Madonsela, Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa, President of the 27th Conference of States Parties, and to H.E. Mr. Lucian Fatu, Ambassador of Romania, Chairman of the Executive Council, for their tireless efforts and outstanding performance in the discharge of their duties.

I would also like to express my gratitude to H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias, Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and to the staff of the Technical Secretariat for the efforts to improve implementation of the Convention and to raise awareness of the important role it plays in multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation worldwide.

I also have the honor of congratulating H.E. Mr. Suljuk Mustansar Tarar, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, on his election to the presidency of the 28th Conference of States Parties and to assure him of our full support for the success and smooth running of this conference.

While fully associating myself with the statement made by the Representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union, I would like to take this opportunity to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Mr President, Dear Colleagues,

It is with great honor that I participate in the general debate of the Conference of States Parties. We are meeting here once a year in The Hague to take concrete measures to guarantee compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, adopt the program budget of the Organization, elect the members of the Executive Council, find ways to promote international cooperation for peaceful purposes in the field of chemical activities.

It is a heavy task that the Conference of States Parties does not accomplish in a vacuum, but in an international context. That is deeply marked by the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine. This issue is to be addressed during our discussion because the proper functioning of the Organization depends on our readiness to face with the tectonic geopolitical changes

that have shaken Europe and the entire world. And to react to these changes and unprecedented challenges without delay, including at the OPCW level.

The international context today is such that since February 24, 2022, under the pretext of the so-called “special military operation” the Moscow authorities have been waging a conventional war of aggression against Ukraine. This war, the largest in Europe since World War II, has already caused the deaths of thousands of people and forced millions more to become temporarily displaced.

The deeds of the Russian Federation constitute acts of military aggression against Ukraine and blatantly violate the Charter of the United Nations, the norms and principles of international law, and in particular the duty to refrain, in international relations, from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is extremely important to remain vigilant. Russian leaders no longer know any limits, neither legal, nor institutional, nor moral. Their only truth is lies. They are prepared to use and will use any type of weapon, including chemical one, without hesitation if this decision can give them a considerable advantage on the battlefield. Therefore, I ask the OPCW and its member states to monitor the situation in Ukraine very closely and, if necessary, intervene without delay. We are to be ready to make Russia pay a high price for any violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention in the course of its illegal war against my country.

Neither this Organization nor its member states must remain indifferent to the suffering of the Ukrainian people. Russia wants to destroy Ukraine, to subjugate it by plunging Ukrainian cities into cold and darkness, to break its resistance by carrying out terrorist attacks against civilian populations. Faced with these atrocities, we cannot continue as if nothing had happened to elect Russian diplomats to important positions within this Organization. We also cannot agree that Russian Federation can represent the Eastern European Group as EC member.

For our part, I would like to assure you that Ukraine was and remains fully attached to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Ukraine will never, under any circumstances, use chemical weapons or industrial chemicals as a weapon. Ukrainians will never let a Chernobyl-type disaster happen again, which could pollute our land and deprive several generations of its benefits.

Mr. Chairperson,

Following the same logic, Ukraine, as a strong supporter of the Chemical Weapons Convention and an active member of the OPCW, reiterates that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone under any circumstance is a violation of international law.

The attack on Mr. Alexei Navalny, Julia and Sergei Skripal is strongly condemned by Ukraine. Also military assistance of the Russian Federation to the Syrian Arab Republic, including in locations where chemical weapons have been used by the Syrian army. Independently, specialist laboratories in Germany, France, Sweden, and two OPCW-designated laboratories have all verified the use of Novichok.

Moreover, there are serious concerns that the Russian Federation uses riot control agents as a method of warfare in Ukraine.

Mr. Chairperson,

Ukraine fully supports the professional, independent and impartial work of the Technical Secretariat's various teams. This is an important step in ensuring accountability for those responsible for the use of chemical weapons. The Joint UN-OPCW Investigation Mechanism (JIM), the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), as well as the Investigation and Identification team (IIT) have all conducted thorough investigations to demonstrate that the Syrian regime has violated its international obligations under the Convention.

We welcome the Director-General's initiatives to communicate with Syria. However, on all of the open problems, there has been no progress reported to the Council. We implore Syria to respond in a constructive manner.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Director-General's proposed revision to the 2024-2025 program and budget, which enables the OPCW to carry out its essential activities, including cooperation and assistance initiatives, has the full support of Ukraine.

We also fully support the Director-General's efforts in introducing further efficiency and cost-saving measures, ensuring the best use of limited available resources.

Therefore, we urge all States Parties to support it as recommended by the Executive Council.

Mr. Chairperson,

The universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention is an important factor to enhance its credibility and ensure irreversible character of chemical disarmament in global dimension.

We strongly believe that in order to create the atmosphere of international trust, transparency and mutual responsibility, we need the highest degree of participation in the Convention.

Since some States have not yet made their choice in favour of the CWC, we also believe that it is a common task to use all possible political instruments to convince them to join the Convention in order to achieve its ultimate goal – to make the world free of chemical weapons.

Ukraine appeals to those countries, which have not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention, to do so without further delay.

Mr. Chairperson,

At this Session of the Conference, we are addressing the issues that demand our close attention. The delegation of Ukraine is ready to fully co-operate with the delegations of other States Parties and the OPCW Secretariat to do its utmost to work for the implementation of the important task of the Organization aimed at complete elimination of chemical weapons.

Thank you, **Mr. Chairperson**, and I would like to request that this statement be treated as an official document of the Conference.

Thank you for your attention.