

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND
AT THE 28th SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO THE
CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
(The Hague, 27 November – 1 December 2023)

*Mister Chairperson,
Director General,
Distinguished Delegates,*

The Polish Delegation joins others in thanking Ambassador Vusimuzi Madonsela of South Africa, Chairperson of the 27th Conference of States Parties, and Ambassador Lucian Fătu of Romania, Chairperson of the Executive Council, for their excellent performance in fulfilling their duties. We also warmly congratulate Ambassador Suljuk Mustansar Tarar of Pakistan for his election as the Chairperson of the 28th Conference of States Parties and assure him of our full engagement and support for the positive outcome of this Conference.

Poland fully aligns itself with the EU statement. In addition, I would like to make the following points in my national capacity:

It has been more than 640 days since Russia's full scale military attack against Ukraine in February 2022. This is already the second Conference of the States Parties that takes place while the war in Ukraine is raging. Poland condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's aggression against Ukraine. It grossly violates the United Nations Charter, undermining the rules-based international order and destabilising political and security situation in the region and beyond.

Since the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine there have been deep concerns about the possibility of use of weapons of mass destruction by Russia. This remains a real threat. It has been reported that Russian soldiers are systematically using in Ukraine riot control agents for military purposes – something that is clearly forbidden by the Convention. So far Russia has failed to provide plausible explanations to the related questions put forward by a number of concerned States Parties. It is not the first time that Russia is accused of violating the CWC. It is enough to recall the cases of poisoning of Alexei Navalny or the Skripals.

By its actions, the Russian Federation has proved beyond doubt that it does not act in good faith on the international stage, questioning its role in all international fora, including the OPCW. The vast majority of members of the Eastern European Group (EEG) are of the view that Russia's continued war of aggression against another State Party from the EEG is the regional factor that cannot be ignored and that in the current situation Russia is unfit to represent the Group in any prominent positions in the OPCW that the EEG is entitled to fill. This is a matter of principle and we call on the States Parties to follow the same approach and to respect the clear preference of the majority of the EEG. It is not about the size of Russia's chemical industry. We question Russia's credibility as a constructive international partner, underlining Russia's destructive role in the region. We believe that the candidacies of Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine to membership of the Executive Council for the term 2024-2026 are much more suitable and deserve the support of the States Parties.

Mister Chairperson,

This year the OPCW has reached an important milestone with the end of destruction of all stockpiles of chemical weapons declared by the States Parties. This is a great achievement bringing us closer to the world free of chemical weapons and the threat of their use. However, we must not be complacent as there are still many challenges ahead of us, posed *inter alia* by the rapid technological changes and non-state actors. We hope that the newly opened ChemTech Centre will be a useful tool in addressing these challenges and will help further strengthen cooperation among the States Parties. The States Parties must ensure that there is no impunity from the use of chemical weapons and that all perpetrators are identified and held accountable. It is regretful that ten years after Syria's accession to the CWC, it has not yet fully complied with its obligations. Poland joins calls on Syrian Arab Republic to resume full cooperation with the Technical Secretariat, resolve all pending issues in its declaration, and return to full compliance with the Convention. We also support further collective measures by the Conference to address the situation.

Despite the fact that the Fifth Review Conference ended without an outcome document it has clearly showed a possibility of a tangible progress on many issues. Poland agrees to use all actionable items identified during the Review Conference as a basis of further work at the OPCW, including on such issues as geographical representation and tenure, as Poland is still very much underrepresented among the OPCW staff and there is a clear need to have more flexibility in prolonging the tenure in exceptional cases. We are also pleased that

the issue of sea dumped chemical weapons was further explored during the preparatory phase to the Fifth Review Conference as well as during the Review Conference itself. Poland welcomes the growing interest of the States Parties in the topic and in order to keep the matter on the agenda and expand the scope of our discussions we invite everyone to a side event on sea dumped chemical weapons on Thursday, November 30th, which we will be hosting together with Germany and Lithuania.

The OPCW plays an instrumental role in promoting and verifying the implementation of the Convention. In order to maintain its full capabilities to operate effectively we must ensure that it has predictable and solid financial resources. Poland supports the proposed draft OPCW Programme and Budget for 2024-2025, and calls on the States Parties to approve it as recommended by the October Executive Council.

The international community should do whatever possible to prevent re-emergence of chemical weapons and their use by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances. Poland keeps underlining this in the discussions at the OPCW, but also in the UNGA resolution on the CWC implementation that we prepare every year. We are pleased that this year's edition of the resolution has again received a broad support in the UNGA First Committee (with over 150 votes in support). Poland thanks the States Parties for the overwhelming support for the resolution. It is a clear indication that the international community is not indifferent to threats and challenges related to the use of chemical weapons. It also reiterates the message of a strong and unwavering support for the efforts of the OPCW Director General and the Technical Secretariat.

I would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document of the 28th Session of the Conference of the States Parties and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you.