



ROYAL NORWEGIAN EMBASSY

**Norwegian statement at the 105<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Council General Debate  
By H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen  
Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Norway**

Mr. Chair,  
Mr. Director-General,  
Distinguished Colleagues,

The OPCW forms part of a rules-based international multilateral order. Norway has always attached the greatest importance to promoting and safeguarding this order. Peacebuilding and disarmament efforts suffer when this order comes under attack.

This is exemplified by Russia's despicable war of aggression against Ukraine, a war which has lasted for more than two years, taken a huge number of lives, and caused immense suffering for the civilian population. In the OPCW, Russia has repeatedly failed to account for its use of chemical weapons in the United Kingdom in 2018 against the Skripals and on its own territory in 2020 against Mr. Navalny. In the same vein, Russia has yet to account meaningfully for reports that it has used riot control agents against the armed forces of Ukraine. Instead, Russia has repeatedly spread unsubstantiated allegations regarding Ukraine's purported plans to use chemical weapons. Russia has also engaged in widespread disinformation campaigns aimed at sowing confusion or discrediting the OPCW. Norway condemns these attempts at undermining international order and multilateralism.

Mr. Chair.

Norway welcomes the statement by Director-General Fernando Arias that the OPCW is monitoring the situation in Gaza and any allegation of use of chemical weapons that could arise. We remain gravely concerned at the immense suffering of the civilian population in Gaza. Norway has condemned Hamas' heinous terrorist attacks in the strongest possible terms, and we have called for the unconditional release of all hostages. Norway has repeatedly stated that Israel's exercise to its right to self-defense must be necessary, proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law. In view of the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Gaza, Norway has supported repeated calls for a ceasefire.

Mr. Chair.

Norway is grateful to the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team for its fourth report of 22 February. The IIT report concludes that there are reasonable grounds to believe that ISIL fired artillery munitions containing sulfur mustard in Marea, Syria on 1 September 2015. Norway unequivocally condemns this use of chemical weapons by ISIL. The report underlines OPCW's crucial function in addressing the threat of all chemical weapons use, by states and by non-state actors alike. Norway reaffirms our commitment to holding to account the perpetrators of all chemical weapons attacks in Syria and beyond. The report further

confirms the importance of OPCW's mandate and its ongoing work in Syria to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks. Norway deeply regrets the failure of the Syrian Arab Republic to comply fully with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and to cooperate with the OPCW to resolve its outstanding issues. Only Syrian authorities are in the position to complete the measures necessary to lift the suspension of Syria's rights and privileges as a State Party to the Convention.

Mr. Chair.

Norway received the news of Mr. Aleksei Navalny's recent demise with great sadness. We pay tribute to him for his courage and strength of conviction. After having been poisoned with a Novichok agent in Russia, Mr. Navalny still chose to return to Russia from hospital in Germany knowing full and well what fate might await him. Russian authorities bear the ultimate responsibility for his death.

Mr. Chair,

It is our shared responsibility that OPCW is fit for purpose, both for present and future challenges. We must ensure that women are part of decision-making bodies at all levels, and that the rights and needs of women are recognized, in line with Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. We should also reinforce interaction between civil society, private sector and the OPCW. External stakeholders, such as chemical industry associations, NGOs, think tanks, academia and others provide invaluable input to the advancement of the Chemical Weapons' Convention. Norway greatly appreciates the ongoing discussions on this topic led by Germany and Ecuador. The discussions are both fruitful and important.

Mr. Chair,

These are tumultuous and trying times.

It is more important than ever that we all stand up in defense of a rules-based international multilateral order. Norway has full confidence in the professionalism, expertise, impartiality, and dedication of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW. We extend our warm thanks to Director-General Fernando Arias and his entire team for the contribution they make to global security and effective multilateralism.

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

Thank you.