



Statement of the Republic of Albania
Delivered by H.E.Mr. Artur Kuko,
Ambassador of the Republic of Albania to the OPCW
at the 105th session of the Executive Council
(The Hague, 5 - 8 March 2024)

Agenda item 6: General Debate

Mr. Chairperson,
Your Excellences,

The Republic of Albania extends its thanks to the Chair of the Executive Council, H.E. Ambassador Lucian Fătu of Romania, for his wise leadership and tireless efforts in executing his duties and assures him of our full support.

We express our unwavering support for the OPCW's Director General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, and reiterate our full confidence in the OPCW Technical Secretariat (TS), its professionalism, impartiality and well-established technical expertise in implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and tasks assigned by the States Parties.

Mr. Chairperson,

The complexities of the international security landscape in the face of global challenges highlight the imperative need to continue our collective efforts in strengthening the global non-proliferation and disarmament structures, as well as the norm against the use of chemical weapons. The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances is a violation of international law and can amount to the most serious of international crimes - war crimes and crimes against humanity. Therefore, the Republic of Albania welcomes the confirmation by the Director-General Fernando Arias that the Secretariat is monitoring all relevant situations, and any allegations of use of chemical

weapons that could arise, and stands ready to assist if requested, in accordance with the Convention.

Mr. Chairperson,

As the Russian aggression enters the third year, Albania stands by Ukraine and its heroic efforts to defend itself and its freedom. Albania will continue to firmly condemn Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, which is in blatant breach of UN Charter and international law as well as OSCE principles and commitments. We repeat our call on the political leadership of the Russian Federation to stop its war of aggression and to immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all its troops, proxies and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

The Republic of Albania remains concerned about the growing number of reports regarding the alleged use of Riot Control Agents by Russia as a method of warfare at the frontlines in Ukraine. This action is in complete violation of Article I, paragraph 5 of the Convention. We strongly urge the Russian Federation to address these reports and provide real answers and plausible explanation to the repeated question: "Have Russian armed forces used Riot Control Agents in combat operations in the conflict in Ukraine?"

Moreover, Albania is deeply saddened by the death of the Russian opposition politician, Mr. Alexei Navalny. Nevertheless, his death does not relieve the Russian Federation of its obligation to provide answers to the questions posed by 45 States Parties in the framework of Art. IX, paragraph 2 of the Convention on 5 October 2021, and to disclose without further delay the circumstances of the assassination attempt of Mr. Navalny in 2020. We are saddened that this is still an ongoing unresolved issue, a resurfacing testament to the lack of cooperation and transparency by the Russian Federation.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Republic of Albania welcomes the work of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) and its fourth report, which identifies the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) as the perpetrators of the chemical weapons attack on 1 September 2015 in Marea, Syria. This new report demonstrates once again the professionalism and impartiality with which the IIT carries out its missions, regardless of the perpetrators of incidents identified.

Previously, chemical weapons use has been independently attributed to the Syrian regime by the UN and the OPCW on nine occasions. We condemn the repeated use of chemical weapons and the lack of transparency and cooperation the Syrian regime has demonstrated in continuous non-alignment with its own declaration to the OPCW more than ten years ago. Those responsible for these acts must be brought to justice. It is time for Syria to understand that it must fully declare and destroy its chemical weapons program in a transparent and verifiable manner. We firmly urge Syria to comply with its obligations under Chemical Weapons Convention and the UN Resolution 2118, documents signed by Syria of free will.

Accountability matters and as members of this noble organisation, it is not much to be asked that we remain aligned, cooperative and transparent.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Republic of Albania applauds the progress achieved in on all actionable items following the Fifth Review Conference. The adoption, by the 28th Conference of the State Parties, of the OPCW Tenure Policy and of the Action Plan on Geographical Diversity are major steps for ensuring the continuous implementation of the Convention, and addressing the importance of geographical diversity, all the while safekeeping the integrity and professionalism threshold of the Technical Secretariat. We also recognize the need for further progress towards gender equality in the Organisation, including through the enhancement of gender mainstreaming in all areas of the Technical Secretariat's work.

Furthermore, Albania recognizes the crucial role of relevant stakeholders such as chemical industry, think tanks, civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations, in the fight to rid the world of chemical weapons. Henceforth, we applaud the efforts of Ecuador and Germany in this regard.

As our mandate as member of the Executive Council has come to an end, Albania is dedicated to continue to engage for a fruitful outcome in the meetings of the Executive Council and is committed to further contribute in the achievement of our most important goal to rid the world of chemical weapons use.

Thank you Mr. Chair.

We kindly request to consider this statement as an official document and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.