

**Statement of the Republic of Poland
at the 105th session of the Executive Council
(The Hague, 5-8 March 2024)**

Mr. Chairperson, Director-General, distinguished Ambassadors and delegates,

Poland aligns itself with the statement of the European Union delivered by the Belgian Presidency. In addition, we wish to highlight a few issues from a national perspective.

Poland thanks Ambassador Lucian Fătu of Romania for steering the work of the Executive Council in an excellent and highly professional manner. Poland reiterates its full support for the OPCW Director General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, and his team. We commend the OPCW Technical Secretariat (TS) for its professionalism, impartiality and full engagement in assisting the States Parties in implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Ensuring that the world is free from chemical weapons and the threat of their use remains of crucial importance, especially against the background of continuing challenges to peace, security and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The war waged in Ukraine by the Russian Federation has already entered into its third year and there is no sign that it can end any time soon. Poland reaffirms its unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and its inherent right of self-defence against the Russian aggression. The Russian Federation bears full responsibility for its war of aggression and all the destruction and loss of life it causes.

While the number of victims of the Russian aggression is growing, there are also growing concerns about the use of chemical weapons by the Russian Federation in the conflict. As Russia has failed to provide any plausible explanations to reports indicating that riot control agents may have been used repeatedly by the Russian armed forces in combat operations in Ukraine, Poland has decided to join other States Parties in calling on the Executive Council to address the matter. If confirmed, the use of riot control agents on the battlefield by Russia would constitute a grave violation of the CWC. We are all obliged to ensure that the CWC is treated seriously and that the States Parties are in full conformity with their obligations. Poland calls on the Technical Secretariat to closely monitor the matter.

Even before the aggression against Ukraine, there were serious questions about Russia's secret chemical weapons programme and the use of chemical nerve agents to assassinate the Scripals and Mr Alexei Navalny. The Russian Federation must allow an independent and transparent international investigation regarding Mr Navalny's poisoning in Russia in August 2020 by a nerve agent of the "Novichok" group as well as all circumstances of his recent sudden death. In both cases, those responsible must be held accountable.

Poland welcomes the release of the fourth report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), published on 22 February 2024. The report concludes that there are reasonable grounds to believe that units of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) fired artillery munitions containing sulphur mustard at several locations in Marea, Syrian Arab Republic on 1 September 2015. The use of chemical weapons by anyone, at any time, and under any circumstances – be it by a state or a non-state actor as in the case of the ISIL – is totally unacceptable. Poland reiterates its full support to the IIT and commends its professionalism, impartiality and high standards of work.

We note the latest report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission, which concluded that there are no reasonable grounds to determine that toxic chemicals were used as a weapon in the reported incident in Al-Yarmouk, Syrian Arab Republic, on 22 October 2017. We also note the information about the 26th round of meetings involving DAT and welcome the fact that it has been possible to resolve another three outstanding issues. Poland reiterates its call on the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the OPCW and all its mechanisms in order to resolve without further delay the rest of outstanding issues related to the original declaration made by Syria.

Building on the positive progress achieved last year in drawing attention of the States Parties to the challenges and threats related to chemical weapons dumped at sea, Poland is interested in further discussions on the matter. We thank all States Parties who participated in the side event devoted to sea dumped chemical weapons, co-organized at the CSP-28 by Poland, Germany and Lithuania. Poland is going to continue to promote this important topic, also during our incoming membership in the Executive Council.

We 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 for your attention.