

**The 105th Session of the Executive Council of
the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)
General Debate
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Hyoung-chan Choe
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the OPCW**

5 March, 2024, The Hague

Mr. Chair,
Mr. Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Let me begin by expressing my appreciation to Chairperson Ambassador Lucian Fatu of Romania for his leadership in preparing for the 105th Session of the Executive Council. I believe this session will indeed deliver meaningful outcomes under his able guidance. I also take this opportunity to thank Director-General Fernando Arias and all the staff members of the Technical Secretariat (TS) for their valuable endeavors to effectively implement the mandates under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Mr. Chair,

Despite our tireless efforts to achieve a safer world by upholding the universal global norms such as the prohibition of chemical weapons and historic milestones of eliminating all declared chemical weapons stockpiles last year, the international community is still struggling to realize a truly chemical weapons-free world.

It has been two years since Russia invaded Ukraine, which continues to pose threats to global security. In particular, this invasion gave rise to serious concerns over the possibility of misuse of toxic chemicals including the alleged use of riot control agents (RCA) as a method of warfare. We urge the Technical Secretariat to closely monitor the situation in Ukraine and enhance its readiness to tackle any possible use of chemical weapons in violation of the Convention.

Chemical weapons issues in Syria remain as another source of grave concern for all of us. We take note of the recently resumed consultations between the Technical Secretariat and Syrian authorities to discuss years-long unresolved chemical weapons allegations and we commend the professional and impartial work by the OPCW teams. Nevertheless, we express our deep concern that it is still a challenging task to clarify all gaps, discrepancies, and

inconsistencies concerning Syria's declarations due to its failure to provide necessary information.

In this regard, the Decision on Syria, which was also supported by the Republic of Korea as one of the co-sponsors, was adopted as a means for collective measures at the last Conference of the States Parties with a view to effectively ensuring Syria's compliance with its obligations under the Convention. The Republic of Korea strongly urges Syria to fully cooperate with the TS in accordance with the relevant OPCW Decisions and UN Resolution.

Mr. Chair,

My delegation welcomes the recent publication of the two papers by the IIT (Investigation and Identification Team) and the FFM (Fact Finding Mission) on Syria. In particular, we are gravely concerned over the findings of the fourth IIT Report on the use of chemical weapons by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Marea in 2015. This report clearly shows that non-State actors like ISIL have the capacity to use chemical weapons just like State actors. The Republic of Korea reiterates that the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstances cannot be accepted.

Mr. Chair,

My delegation has repeatedly emphasized the importance of ensuring the OPCW remains fit for purpose by fostering a more flexible human resources policy based on broader geographical representation as well as enhanced gender equality. We welcome the adoption of the last CSP Decisions on the Geographical Representation and on the Tenure Policy. We look forward to their successful implementation in the future and indeed substantial contribution to the overall capacity of the Organisation.

Strengthening the engagement with civil society is also an important task to ensure that the OPCW functions properly given its expertise in chemical-related fields. My delegation hopes that the on-going consultations on this matter may provide good opportunities to muster our collective wisdom.

Mr. Chair,

Last but not least, my delegation reiterates the significance of universal adherence to the CWC. In order to secure the full effectiveness of the Convention even after the destruction of all declared chemical weapons, ensuring universality should be discussed as one of the priorities for the OPCW. As long as there is the possibility that chemical weapons

exist in any country, including States not party, potential threats to the Convention exist as well. In this context, we urge the four remaining States not Party to join the convention as early as possible without preconditions. We welcome South Sudan's willingness to join the Convention announced at the last CSP and trust that the TS will strengthen its readiness for potential new membership in the future.

Mr. Chair,

I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this Executive Council Session and be published on the OPCW website and external server.

Thank you. /END/