



STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
BY H.E. AMBASSADOR DÁNIEL MIHÁLY HOROGSZEGI SZILÁGYI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF HUNGARY TO THE OPCW
AT THE 106th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(The Hague, 9 – 12 July 2024)

Agenda item 6 (c) – Elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro and Ukraine as well as the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the EEA (European Economic Area) align themselves with this statement. Andorra, Monaco and San Marino also associate themselves with this statement.

The use of chemical weapons by anyone – be it a State or a non-State actor – 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.

Chemical weapons use has been independently attributed to the Syrian regime on nine occasions by the thorough and comprehensive investigations carried out by the UN and the OPCW. The European Union has imposed restrictive measures on high-level Syrian regime officials and scientists as well as entities for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons. We are ready to consider introducing further measures as appropriate.

As a member of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, the EU is committed to ensuring full accountability for those responsible for these heinous crimes in Syria and beyond. In this context, we take note of the establishment here in The Hague on 17 June 2024 of a cross-regional working group to advance proposals for international criminal accountability for documented chemical weapons use.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Decision adopted by the 25th Conference of the States Parties suspending the voting rights and other privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic was a strong message against impunity for the use of chemical weapons, and in defence of International Law, including International Humanitarian Law, as well as the integrity of the Convention. It was an appropriate response by the Conference to the clear violations by the Syrian regime of the Convention and its core

principles. In order for its voting rights and privileges to be restored, the Syrian regime needs to resolve all pending issues, declare the full extent of its chemical weapons programme, and return to full compliance in accordance with its obligations under UNSC Resolution 2118 and the CWC.

The continued non-compliance of the Syrian regime causes serious damage to the object and purpose of the Convention. The Conference therefore decided at its 28th Session on additional measures related to, inter alia, transfers of scheduled chemicals, their pre-cursors and equipment to Syria and elsewhere (cf. C-28/DEC/CRP.12). Our common efforts to fully implement this decision will be crucial to prevent any future use of chemical weapons in Syria, be it by a State or a non-State actor. It also encourages increased cooperation to tackle the threat of chemical weapons use by non-state actors, including terrorist groups.

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union takes note of the Director-General's report (EC-106/DG.7) regarding the workstrands on eliminating the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme and regrets the complete lack of progress: more than ten years after Syria's initial declaration, numerous and important questions remain unanswered. There is no alternative to full and effective cooperation by Syria with the OPCW and all its established mechanisms, including the Investigation and Identification Team.

We reject criticism of the IIT by a few States Parties that call its creation "illegal" or "illegitimate". We would like to remind that majority voting is explicitly foreseen in the Convention if consensus is impossible to find. A State Party joining the CWC is subscribing to its rules, including as regards majority voting and budgetary consequences of these votes. Once taken, all States Parties are bound by a decision, there are no exceptions, no cherry-picking. The four reports issued so far demonstrate the professionalism and independence with which the IIT carries out its missions, regardless of which perpetrator has been identified.

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.

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF HUNGARY TO THE OPCW
AT THE 106th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(The Hague, 9 – 12 July 2024)

Agenda item 6 (e) - Addressing the threat from chemical weapons use

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro and Ukraine as well as the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the EEA (European Economic Area) align themselves with this statement. Andorra, Monaco and San Marino also associate themselves with this statement.

The European Union remains strongly concerned about the growing number of reports on the use of Riot Control Agents (RCA) by Russia as a method of warfare, including by Russian information sources bragging about how successful the method is. The European Union is also strongly concerned about the alleged use of choking agent chloropicrin. This is not the first time that the world is alerted about the use of chemical weapons by Russia.

Until today, Russia has not provided a plausible explanation when asked about RCA incidents pursuant to Article IX, paragraph 2 of the Convention. Instead, Russia attempts to deflect its responsibilities and shift the blame. This is not acceptable. Twelve States Parties have therefore requested the Executive Council to assist in clarifying the situation pursuant to Article IX, paragraph 3 of the Convention.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is well established that Ukraine is a responsible member of the Chemical Weapons Convention and in full compliance with the Convention. Russia is engaging in campaigns of state-controlled disinformation against Ukraine and others regarding chemical weapons. At the same time, Russia risks exposing the Ukrainian population to toxic chemicals through continuous deliberate attacks against civilian industrial facilities.

The European Union welcomes the adoption of the Ad hoc Agreement between Ukraine and the Secretariat on Privileges and Immunities enabling an OPCW Technical Assistance Visit. We expect the Secretariat to continue monitoring the situation in Ukraine closely and to be

fully prepared to take action should this be requested in line with the provisions of the Convention. We furthermore appreciate the Secretariat's work in providing equipment and training to Ukraine in order to assist them with their preparedness to respond to contingencies.

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union reiterates its strong concerns that the Russian Federation has not reacted to international calls for a thorough and transparent investigation into the assassination attempt on Mr. Alexei Navalny in Russia in August 2020 by a nerve agent of the "Novichok" group (a substance developed by Russia). The poisoning has been confirmed, beyond doubt, by specialised laboratories in Germany, France and Sweden, as well as by the OPCW. We once again urge the Russian Federation to provide substantial 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 this assassination attempt. The tragic death of Mr. Navalny does not relieve the Russian Federation of its obligation to provide answers to the questions posed. Impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not and will not be tolerated. Those responsible for the assassination attempts must be brought to justice.

Mr. Chairperson,

Let us recall that Russia – a member of the UN Security Council – is responsible for the ongoing war. Russia is responsible for incalculable violations of international law and international humanitarian law in Ukraine. Russia has repeatedly utilised chemical weapons in assassinations and assassination attempts. Russia has been and is engaging in sowing disinformation. We have to react to this.

Since 15 October 2020, the European Union has imposed restrictive measures under its chemical weapons sanctions regime against fourteen Russian individuals, including agents, high-ranking officials of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) and Russian chemical weapons experts, as well as one entity responsible for inducing and providing support to the poisoning of Mr. Alexei Navalny. Previously, the EU has introduced sanctions on four senior officials from the Russian military intelligence service involved in the poisonings with "Novichok" in Salisbury in 2018. The EU has also introduced a ban on the export of chemicals to Russia that could be misused for manufacturing chemical weapons.

I would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document of the One-Hundred and Sixth Session of the Executive Council and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

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