

Statement by H.E. Mr. Olivier Belle, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Belgium to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) at the 109th Session of the Executive Council of the States Parties under agenda item 5 (general debate)

Acknowledgements.

First of all, Belgium would like to present its compliments to the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW.

With regard to Syria, we take good note of the Director-General's latest report on the progress of the programme to eliminate chemical weapons in Syria. We can only encourage the new Syrian authorities to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat, and welcome the signals to that effect. The basis of this cooperation must obviously be essentially technical. In this respect, the Technical Secretariat has our full confidence in carrying out a mission that we must monitor and support without getting bogged down in political considerations.

As for the Russia-Ukraine dossier, we remain very concerned by the recent reports - including the one relating to the third technical assistance visit - confirming the use of riot control agents in the war in Ukraine. Belgium has also taken note of the joint communication from the intelligence services of the Netherlands and Germany, warning of the intensification of the use of chemical weapons by Russia in Ukraine.

Belgium is very concerned about this serious threat to the integrity of the Convention and the global norm against the use of chemical weapons. The OPCW Technical Secretariat must now focus on officially attributing responsibility and identifying the perpetrators so that they can be held accountable.

With regard to Sudan, allegations of the use of chemical weapons raise serious concerns. We have taken note of Sudan's note verbales following the various requests for clarification made to it, on the basis of Article IX.4 of the Convention. We call on the Technical Secretariat to examine the situation as part of its technical mandate and to inform the States Parties of the conclusions of its examination.

These various issues should not divert attention from monitoring other matters or from our Organisation's work in other areas. Clarification is always needed in cases of fatal poisoning. Furthermore, Artificial Intelligence in the field of chemical weapons must also be the focus of our attention and lead us to master its development in order to neutralise its harmful effects and reap the benefits for the OPCW's mission.

The multilateral scene is shaken by considerable turbulence. To put it mildly. It is tending more and more towards multi-particularism, which is taking players further and further away from solutions that should be in the general interest. A world free of chemical weapons is in the general interest, as is the easing of global tensions through justice and respect for international law, of which the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is an integral part.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and all its States Parties now have a unique opportunity to demonstrate that the force of law, multilateralism and the international organisations that embody it can offer a credible alternative to the use of force and political manipulation that risk leading the world to cataclysm. Let us not miss this opportunity.

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Ambassador

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