

STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
BY H.E. ULF MELGAARD
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AT THE 109th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(The Hague, 8 - 11 July 2025)

Agenda item 5: General debate

Mr. Chairperson,

Director-General,

Distinguished guests,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU).

Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, San Marino and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

The European Union commends H.E. Ambassador Andrés Terán Parral of Ecuador for his able stewardship of the Executive Council during his chairmanship. We extend a warm welcome to the new Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Thomas Schieb of Germany, and assure him of our full support in steering the work of the Council. The European Union also wishes to express its full confidence OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, and the Secretariat.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Chemical Weapons Convention is one of the success stories and key pillars of the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. The European Union will continue to actively promote its full and effective implementation, as well as its universalisation. A concrete expression of this are the four on-going EU voluntary financial contributions totalling EUR 8.7 million in support of the OPCW activities for the period 2023-6. 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. Furthermore, the EU is currently renewing its chemical weapons sanctions. The restrictive measures against individuals and entities involved in the proliferation and use of chemical weapons currently apply until October 2025.

Mr. Chairperson,

Today, almost 3 and a half years since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, the European Union reiterates its resolute condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a manifest violation of international law including the UN Charter. We reaffirm our continued support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. We reconfirm the EU's unwavering commitment to providing continued political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes. Russia must not prevail.

The European Union is seriously concerned by the growing number of reported cases of uses of Riot Control Agents by Russia as a method of warfare, which is explicitly prohibited by the Convention, as well as by the alleged use of choking agent chloropicrin against Ukrainian soldiers. Ignoring legitimate international concerns, Russia still has not provided a credible explanation pursuant to Article IX, paragraph 2 and 3 of the Convention.

Instead, Russia continues to deflect its responsibilities and distort facts with disinformation, whereas the results of the three TAV reports point to a pattern of riot control use as a method of warfare in the frontlines in Ukraine. In light of the seriousness of the situation and to enhance the global norm against the use of chemical weapons, the European Union continues to call for a timely attribution of the proven use of riot control agents as a method of warfare.

The international community also still awaits a credible response from Russia regarding the poisoning of Mr. Alexei Navalny in August 2020. The European Union hence calls on Russia to allow an independent and transparent international investigation into his sudden death on 16 February 2024, as well as the assassination attempt on his life with a nerve agent of the Novichok group.

Mr. Chairperson,

Following the fall of the Assad regime, the EU has consistently reiterated its support for a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned transition. At the Ninth Brussels Conference on "Standing with Syria" on 17 March 2025 the EU announced a significant financial package—nearly €2.5 billion for 2025 and 2026—reflecting the EU's broader commitment to supporting Syria's transition, socio-economic recovery, and urgent humanitarian needs. On 28 May 2025 the EU lifted its economic sanctions on Syria, further confirming the EU's support for Syria's transition.

In parallel, the European Union is preparing a substantial voluntary financial contribution to support the OPCW's activities in Syria to ensure clarification of the full extent of the Assad regime's chemical weapons programme, the inventory and verified destruction of any remaining chemical weapons stocks, as well as accountability for the use of chemical weapons. We urge all States Parties to consider contributing to this effort.

In this context, the European Union commends the Syrian transitional authorities' cooperation with the OPCW and encourages it to ensure Syria's return to full compliance of the Convention as soon as possible. We have taken good note of the Secretariat's briefings and in-country deployments and look forward to swift implementation of the next steps to eliminate Syria's

chemical weapons programme for good, to counter proliferation risks and to hold the perpetrators to account.

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union has taken note with concern of the information indicating possible use of chemical weapons in Sudan. Pursuant to Article IX, paragraph 4 of the Convention, the Executive Council has been seized to clarify the situation. The allegations of use of chemical weapons should be addressed in an expeditious, objective and transparent manner. In this context, we welcome the confirmation 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.

Thank you.

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