

**Statement by Dr Nikolaus Korczynski, Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to
the OPCW, at the 109th Session of
The Executive Council**

(The Hague, 8 – 11 July 2025)

Mr. Chairperson, Director-General,

Excellencies and distinguished Delegates,

Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Denmark on behalf of the European Union.

This is an important period for the OPCW, with several key dossiers requiring political focus and utmost effort:

For the first time in over a decade, we can finally work towards ridding Syria from the remainders of Assad regime's chemical weapons programme. We welcome that the new Syria is cooperating closely with the TS.

The work ahead will be technically complex and politically sensitive—but it is also a unique chance to bring clarity, accountability and closure on one of the Convention's gravest cases of non-compliance. Fortunately, through the tireless work of the DAT, FFM, and IIT, the Secretariat has accumulated a substantial body of knowledge on it.

We welcome the Technical Secretariats deployments to Syria in March, April and June, and we hope that the OPCW will manage to establish a permanent presence in the country shortly. The stakes and the urgency are high: until every site is secured and all materials are verified and destroyed, the risk of diversion remains acute. Given these continued proliferation risks it is imperative that the OPCW mission to Syria gets to work quickly. We believe a pragmatic approach in line with the requirements of the Convention and its Verification Annex is necessary in order to speed up the inspection of relevant facilities, the documentation of findings and the securing of remains of Assad's chemical weapons programme with a view to their swift destruction under control of the OPCW. Regarding the difficult conditions under which the OPCW would have to operate, maximum restraint of all parties active in Syria will be imperative to achieve the OPCW's mission objective.

Germany stands ready to contribute – as we did during previous destruction operations in Syria (2014–15) and Libya (2016–17). This March, the Executive Council had the opportunity to familiarize itself with the German facilities in Munster, which were instrumental in undertaking the destruction work in these instances. We encourage all States Parties to consider how they, too, can support the Organisation.

Mr. Chairperson,

For over a year now, this Council has dealt with deeply troubling allegations of chemical-agents' use by Russia in its ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine. These include the employment of riot control agents and other toxic chemicals, such as the scheduled choking agent chloropicrin.

On July 4, the Dutch and German foreign intelligence services issued a joint statement warning that Russia's use of such chemical weapons is intensifying.

The Technical Secretariat has, in total, released three TAV reports, all confirming the use of Riot Control Agents as a method of warfare on Ukrainian territory. That means three proven cases of direct violations of the Convention.

Given Russia's dismissive stance to all credible allegations, including those unwittingly produced by its own, tightly state-controlled media, we should not expect cooperation. While the TAV reports, by their mandate, do not assign attribution, the evidence clearly points to Russian responsibility. We now need to move towards official attribution by the OPCW.

Mr. Chairperson,

Among the important issues before us this year, one stands out for its long-term impact: appointing a successor to Director-General Fernando Arias. The current DG's leadership is one of lasting legacy. It is critical that the selection process is fair, transparent, and efficient, and I am sure that the EC Chair will do his utmost to ensure that.

Mr. Chairperson,

Speaking of efficiency - beyond these operative issues, we must keep sight of the structural discussions that shape the OPCW's future.

Germany remains committed to this Organisation's excellence; its good, efficient governance, financial sustainability, and strategic approach to Chemical Weapons related issues, including Industry Verification. These are not merely

technical matters—they underpin the OPCW’s ability to respond to threats and adapt to new realities.

A key area is the rapid evolution of science and technology. The effects of AI on all aspects of chemical non-proliferation, in particular, need this Organization’s watchful attention. We welcome that the Temporary Working Group of the Scientific Advisory Board, chaired by Dr. Müller-Buschbaum of Germany, has started examining how AI may affect the objectives and implementation of the Convention. We believe this work will be critical to keeping the OPCW future-proof.

Concluding, we would like to once again commend Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat for their professionalism and unwavering commitment to rid our planet of Chemical Weapons. Germany remains a steadfast supporter of the OPCW and will continue to support its efficient work.
