



OPCW

Executive Council

112th Session
7 – 10 July 2026

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4 May 2026
ENGLISH and FRENCH only

NOTE BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

**CIRCULATION OF NOTE VERBALE NO. 2026-0164524 (DATED 4 MAY 2026)
SUBMITTED BY THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATION
OF FRANCE TO THE OPCW**

The Chairperson of the Executive Council (the Council) herewith circulates to the members of the Council Note Verbale No. 2026-0164524 (dated 4 May 2026) from the Permanent Representation of France to the OPCW with reference to the joint request for clarification contained in its Note Verbale No. 2026-0082979 (dated 5 March 2026), submitted in accordance with paragraph 4 of Article IX of the Chemical Weapons Convention, by France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (EC-111/NAT.9, dated 5 March 2026), as well as the response by the Russian Federation in Note Verbale No. 23 (dated 13 March 2026) (EC-111/3, dated 13 March 2026).

Annex: Letter L/PMO-707/26 Dated 4 May 2026



Annex

LETTER L/PMO-707/26 DATED 4 MAY 2026

ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS



The Hague, 4 May 2026
L/PMO-707/26

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

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On 4 May 2026, the Executive Council (Council) received Note Verbale No. 2026-0164524 from the Permanent Representation of France to the OPCW, with reference to the joint request for clarification contained in its Note Verbale No. 2026-0082979 (dated 5 March 2026), submitted in accordance with Article IX, paragraph 4 of the Chemical Weapons Convention, by France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as the response by the Russian Federation (Note Verbale No. 23, dated 13 March 2026).

Further to the request by the Permanent Representations of France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and in view of my responsibilities as Chairperson of the Council, I hereby kindly inform the members of the Council that Note Verbale No. 2026-0164524 from the Permanent Representation of France to the OPCW, annexed herewith, has been transmitted to the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to the OPCW.

Please accept, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

H.E. Ambassador Thomas Schieb
Chairperson of the Executive Council
Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Annex: Note Verbale No. 2026-0164524 from the Permanent Representation of France to the OPCW to H.E. Ambassador Thomas Schieb, Chairperson of the Council, dated 4 May 2026

Member States of the Executive Council
Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

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**PERMANENT REPRESENTATION
OF FRANCE TO THE
ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS**

*Liberty
Equality
Fraternity*

No. 2026-0164524

The Permanent Representation of France to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons presents its compliments to the Chairperson of the Executive Council, His Excellency Mr Thomas Schieb, Permanent Representative of Germany to the OPCW, and kindly requests that he transmit this note verbale to the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation, on behalf of the Permanent Representations of France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

In Note Verbale No. 2026-0082979 (dated 5 March), France, together with Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, requested that the Russian Federation answer four questions regarding the exposure of Mr Navalny to a toxin—epibatidine—while he was being detained in a Russian prison. We reiterate our conclusion that only the Russian authorities had the means and opportunity to administer epibatidine to Mr Navalny during his detention.

France takes note of the responses provided by Russia in its Note Verbale No. 23 (dated 13 March 2026), but considers that the explanations given fail to provide compelling clarification on the matter. Furthermore, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland consider Russia's invocation of paragraph 3 of Article IX to be inapplicable in this case.

France notes that Russia states in its note verbale that “all chemical weapons inherited from the Soviet Union have been completely eliminated under international verification and control.” However, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland are rather more concerned about the nature of the Russian chemical weapons programme since the collapse of the USSR.

France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland should therefore like to reiterate the questions raised in their Note Verbale No. 2026-0082979 (dated 5 March):

- I. Please provide information sufficient to clarify how the neurotoxin epibatidine was administered to Mr Navalny, as confirmed in biological samples of Mr Navalny's tissue, while he was detained in a Russian state penal colony.
- II. What measures have been taken by the Russian Federation to identify the individuals, authorities, or entities responsible for the acquisition, handling, and delivery of epibatidine to Mr Navalny?

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- III. Please clarify how long Russia has pursued a chemical weapons programme based on epibatidine.
- IV. Please clarify why Russia has not declared this chemical weapons programme as per its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Russia's willingness to develop and deploy highly toxic chemicals—after having already used nerve agents from the "novichok" group in Salisbury in 2018 and attempted to poison Mr Navalny in 2020—reveals a clear and alarming pattern. We highlight the seriousness of Russia's continued violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention and underscore the necessity of ensuring that those responsible be held to account.

The Permanent Representation of France to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, on behalf of the five aforementioned countries, would also be grateful to the Chairperson of the Executive Council if he could request the Technical Secretariat to circulate this note verbale and its attachments to all States Parties and to publish them on the internal server as an official document of the 112th Session of the Executive Council and on the public website of the OPCW.

[initials and seal of the Embassy of France]

The Permanent Representation of France to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons takes this opportunity to renew to the Chairperson of the Executive Council and to Technical Secretariat of the OPCW the assurances of its highest consideration.

The Hague, 4 May 2026

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
Technical Secretariat
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