

STATEMENT

DELIVERED BY MR ANDRIUS KRIVAS,  
VICE-MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA,  
AT THE 20<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES  
30 November 2015

Mr. Chairperson,  
Mr. Director-General,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Lithuania fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by Mr. Jacek Bylica, Representative of the European External Action Service.

Please allow me to join those who have expressed a warm welcome to the new Chair of the Conference, Ambassador Eduardo Ibarrola-Nicolín of Mexico. We are looking forward to working closely with him.

Mr. Chairperson,

We all well remember August 2013 when the Syrian regime used sarin gas which left hundreds of Syrians dead and many more injured. International community stood united which led to the destruction of the vast majority of declared chemical weapons. While the verification of Syria's chemical weapons declaration is ongoing and some very important questions remain, the efforts of the international community and devoted work by the OPCW deserve a special mention and gratitude. The OPCW proved its value by its dedication and concrete results.

Nowadays the risk increases the weapons of mass destruction may be used not only by states but also by non-state armed groups or terrorists. The possibility of a mass casualty strike on a major city by some terrorist organization using some kind of biological or chemical agent is a nightmare scenario. All the more need for us States Parties and the OPCW to remain vigilant.

I would like to draw the attention of this distinguished assembly to the residual issue of the sea-dumped chemical weapons from World Wars One and Two in the Baltic Sea and elsewhere. It is estimated that the Baltic seabed alone contains at least 40 thousand tons of chemical weapons, i.e. 40 times as much as the OPCW and the States Parties dealt with when destroying the declared chemical weapons of the Syrian Arab Republic. We need to reassess the risks related to the facts that locations of a number of weapons dumping sites are publically available information and that modern technologies make it increasingly easy for non-state actors to access those weapons.

Chemical munitions can, in some cases, be accessible with the help of simple scuba-diving equipment.

Lithuania highly appreciates the visionary and comprehensive approach taken by the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW in the Note "The OPCW in 2025: Ensuring a World Free of Chemical Weapons" (S/1252/2015, 6 March 2015). The issue of sea-dumped chemical weapons has been given due attention in this Vision Paper. The relevance of our Organization depends on our ability to turn its energy and abilities into prevention of re-emergence of chemical weapons, including those dumped at sea. We see this as a necessary element complementing the efforts toward the destruction of declared stockpiles. The OPCW could be instrumental in meeting the challenge of the sea-dumped chemical weapons. Moreover, it is the only relevant organization that is capable to ensure the proper coordination among the State Parties, as well as coordination and cooperation with other international organizations and mechanisms. For a humble start, the State Parties have already been invited by the Third Review Conference to voluntarily share information and cooperate in raising awareness of problems caused by sea-dumped chemical munitions.

As noted in the Vision Paper, the OPCW should serve as a platform for States Parties and relevant stakeholders to promote solutions for the sea-dumped chemical weapons. By no means does it turn the OPCW into an environmental organization. Prevention of re-emergence of chemical weapons and protection measures against them regardless of their location – inland or under water – represents core business of our Organization.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me take this opportunity to invite representatives of the States Parties to the side-event organized by our Delegation and the International Dialogue on Underwater Munitions (IDUM) on the threats of potential re-emergence of sea-dumped chemical munitions, today, in the OPCW Headquarters, leper Room, at 1.30 pm.

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session of the Conference and posted to the OPCW website.

Thank you for your attention.