

Statement by H.E. Jana Reinišová, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the OPCW, at the 22nd Conference of the States Parties

Mr. Chairman

Mr. Director-General,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement made by Mr. Jacek Bylica, Special Envoy for Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, on behalf of the European Union. The following comments will be made in our national capacity.

At the outset, we would also like to express our appreciation for the work of the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Israng of Germany, and welcome and pledge our full support to the new Chairperson, Ambassador Bellouki of Morocco. We would also like to extend our appreciation for the work and leadership of Director General Üzümcü and welcome the consensual decision of the 86th Executive Council session to recommend to the CSP Ambassador Arias of Spain for the position of the next Director General of this organisation.

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of this organisation, it is clear that we have achieved a lot of progress towards our goal to bring about a world free of one type of weapons of mass destruction. However at the same time, many challenges remain. In Syria, chemical weapons continue to be used by the Syrian government and by ISIL, as was recently confirmed by the OPCW - UN Joint Investigative Mechanism in its 7th report. We are outraged by these horrible crimes and those responsible for them must be held accountable. The use of chemical weapons by a State Party to the CWC is a clear violation of the Convention and the Czech Republic regrets the fact that the OPCW Executive Council has so far not been able to react to this situation. In this context, I would like to stress that we have full confidence and trust in the work of both the FFM and the JIM. We are also deeply concerned by the fact that, due to repeated vetoes by the Russian Federation, the UN Security Council has not been able to renew the mandate of the JIM in order to further investigate other alleged incidents and identify those accountable for them.

Mr. Chairman

The Czech Republic strongly believes in the multilateral approach to security, disarmament and non-proliferation as the best way of maintaining international peace and security. The OPCW has proved, for the past 20 years, how successful this approach can be. The more we regret that the use of chemical weapons has not yet been completely abandoned. The Czech Republic is ready to continue to actively contribute to the work of the OPCW, both here in The Hague, where we have presented our candidature for the membership of the Executive Council for the period 2018-2020, but also around the world. Allow me to mention one

practical example of our involvement in the work of the OPCW. The Czech Republic has traditionally been very active in the field of international OPCW trainings based on Article X of the Convention, with a focus on Africa and Latin America. The objective is to improve chemical safety by enhancing the preparedness of authorities in those regions in case of a chemical incident. As an example, earlier this month, one such course was led by Czech instructors in Uganda.

Mr. Chairman

2018 will be a very important year for this organisation, concluded by the 4th Review Conference. We welcome and appreciate the work done so far in the Open-ended Working Group on Future Priorities and look forward to further discussions in the coming months, including in the Open-ended Working Group for Preparing the Review Conference which we are about to set up at this Conference.

While the OPCW needs to retain its current, and often unique, capabilities critical for the viability of the verification regime as well as for contingency operations such as the Fact Finding Mission, different challenges related to preventing re-emergence of chemical weapons should also be addressed. Especially the threat posed by Non-State Actors remains real and implies that more work should be done to ensure that toxic chemicals, not only scheduled chemicals, cannot fall into the wrong hands and be misused as chemical weapons. The OPCW is well placed to do more in the field of chemical security, in coordination with other stakeholders. We trust that through the deliberations leading up to the Review Conference, we will define ways how to counter the terrorist threat and enhance chemical security worldwide. The Czech Republic stands ready to remain an active participant in these discussions.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to request that this statement be considered an official document of the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties and posted on the OPCW external server.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman