

**STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA
TO THE OPCW
AT THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE STATE PARTIES
JUNE, 2018**

Mr. Chairman,

Latvia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union earlier and would like to make the following remarks in national capacity.

In recent years the Chemical Weapons Convention has been challenged on number of occasions. This poses a threat to a wider non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

The use of chemical weapons in Malaysia, Syria, Iraq and most recently, in United Kingdom, is a testimony to the negligence of the international norm stipulated in the Chemical Weapons Convention. Therefore we welcome the initiative to convene this Special Session of the Conference of State parties of the CWC.

Latvia reaffirms its condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the use of chemical weapons by state and non-state actors, under any circumstances. No one and nowhere should ever be exposed to such heinous attacks and threats.

It is our responsibility to uphold the longstanding international norm against the use of chemical weapons. Further erosion of the global norm against the chemical weapons use must be strongly opposed and deterred appropriately.

We praise the efforts aimed at strengthening the rules-based international order and global arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation architecture. Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has been doing a crucial work in this regard, but it needs further support.

The OPCW and particularly the Technical Secretariat has shown the highest degree of professionalism and dedication to the task. And we have a number of examples – the difficult work of Fact Finding Mission in Syria, the technical assistance visits provided to the states parties upon their request and supporting role of the OPCW – UN Joint Investigative Mechanism.

Only two weeks ago the FFM report confirmed that chlorine and sarin were very likely used as chemical weapons in the attacks in Syrian Arab Republic in March last year. A few months earlier Technical Assistance Visit report confirmed that a nerve agent was used in United Kingdom this March.

Mr. Chairman,

These findings confirm that horrific crimes have been committed and that joint and coordinated international action in combating proliferation and use of chemical weapons, as well as the creation of a credible attribution mechanism, is crucial.

It is the responsibility of all member-states of the CWC to ensure that the use of chemical weapons does not become a norm and that the perpetrators of these horrendous crimes are brought to justice. In this regard, we reiterate our support to the Ministerial Declaration adopted in Paris last month at the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons meeting.

At the same time, we deeply regret that it was not possible to renew the mandate of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism last November. In view of this development, the role of the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat in conducting independent investigation of alleged use of chemical weapons is of utmost significance. The Technical Secretariat has shown the highest level of professionalism and impartiality to live up to its tasks and to contribute to universal attribution instances when chemical weapons have been used.

Mr. Chairman,

Latvia remains strongly committed to adhere fully to the principles of the CWC and expect no less from other States Parties. In light of all this Latvia is supporting the draft decision presented by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and appeals to all States Parties to support and adopt this decision.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman