

Statement by H.E. Ambassador René Miko, Permanent Representative of the  
Czech Republic to the OPCW

at the One-Hundred Eighth Session of the Executive Council

4-7 March 2025

Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General, distinguished delegates,

The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and would like to use this opportunity to make a few remarks in its national capacity.

First of all, let me thank you, Excellency, dear Ambassador Teran Parral, for your stewardship of the Executive Council, and assure you of our continuous support.

Allow me also to commend the Director General, Fernando Arias, and the Technical Secretariat for all the outstanding work conducted during the intersessional period. We reiterate our full confidence in you, Director General, and in your staff. We very much value your courage, professionalism, impartiality, independence and immense technical expertise.

Mr Chair,

Czechia welcomes the result of last elections to the Executive Council. We appreciate that 126 State Parties put their trust in us and elected Czechia (and North Macedonia) as one of the EC Members for EEG for period 2025-2027. We are looking forward to cooperating with other EC members during this term. Czechia has always been a very active and reliable partner at the OPCW and we will continue to do so. We are committed to support the Technical Secretariat and contribute to the progress for achieving the world free of chemical weapons.

Mr Chair,

The fall of the Asad regime will hopefully mark a new era for cooperation between Syria and the OPCW that would allow to finally close the Syrian dossier after more than 12 years.

We welcome the timely visit of the Director General to Damascus on 8 February. The security and integrity of the declared chemical weapons research, development, production, storage and testing sites is of utmost importance and we call on the Syrian authorities to ensure that all of them are fully secured. Czechia remains concerned by the possibly undeclared production or storage facilities and further weaponisation of chemical warfare agents in Syria, as new undeclared activities were revealed by the DAT, which led to opening of three new

outstanding issues, two of them very serious, in July last year. We encourage Syria to work together with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to declare the full extent of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

The use of chemical weapons is prohibited by the Convention and the Assad regime has been attributed with such a use already on nine occasions by the UN-OPCW JIM and OPCW IIT. The FFM concluded that chemical weapons had been used in Syria on 20 occasions.

We reiterate that the fall of the criminal Assad regime by no means marks the end of the fight against impunity for the use of chemical weapons. To the contrary, we see it as a new beginning. Therefore, we call on Syrian authorities to allow all OPCW missions to enter the Syrian territory and fulfil their mandates, so that the Syrian dossier can be closed once and for all.

Mr Chair,

Czechia is deeply concerned by the findings of the second report of the OPCW Technical Assistance Visit to Ukraine. We commend the Technical Secretariat and the Ukrainian authorities for their professional work, inter alia in documenting the samples collection from the battlefield and maintaining the chain of custody, a task particularly difficult amidst gunfire. It allowed to undeniably confirm that the Riot Control Agents had been used in Ukraine on three occasions as a method of warfare, which is strictly prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Together with the first report of the TAV, the use of RCAs on the Ukrainian battlefield has been confirmed already on four occasions. It indicates a pattern of RCAs use as a method of warfare in Ukraine; a serious issue indeed that should be of concern to all of us. Responsibility for this needs to be inferred.

For this reason, we joined Germany and other ten states to call upon Russia to clarify the situation. In July 2024 we requested the then newly constituted Executive Council to assist in clarifying the situation related to the reports pursuant to Article IX para 3 of the Convention.

Russia, like many others, has ratified the Convention and thus committed to comply with its provisions. Regrettably, Russia has not provided any substantiated clarifications on the prohibited use of these toxic agents until today. To the contrary, Russia embarked on a journey of false accusations and distortion of facts.

Such Russian behaviour is not new. In previous cases of poisoning of Mr Alexei Navalny or the Skripals by a chemical nerve agent of the Novichok group, similar

narratives have been used by Russia. We repeat calls on Russia to fully cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation.

Czechia believes that all perpetrators of the chemical weapons use shall be held accountable. In that vein, we engage with other States to discuss how to enhance such criminal accountability.

Mr. Chair,

Turning to the emerging technologies and the AI in particular, we welcome the timely efforts of the DG to explore the challenges and opportunities that they pose to the work of the OPCW and to the implementation of the Convention in general. Czechia believes that States Parties should be involved in the process and we stand ready to contribute to these endeavours.

With respect to the capacity building, Czechia is a long-term supporter of the OPCW protection and assistance activities based on Article X of the Convention. Our support is both financial and in-kind by providing voluntary contributions earmarked for Africa programme and by conducting trainings with mostly African participants.

Due to urgent needs to enhance preparedness and response capacities of Ukraine in the event of a chemical incident or its threat, Czechia has provided a voluntary contribution in order to fulfil this aim.

We look forward to further cooperation with the Secretariat on enhancing the preparedness and response capacities of other States too.

Given the current circumstances and above-mentioned developments, retention and transfer of relevant knowledge, skills and expertise is crucial for the future work of the Organisation. We welcome the draft decision on the amendment of the OPCW Tenure Policy to allow rehiring on exceptional basis, as it should allow the Secretariat to enhance its ability to ensure continued implementation of the Convention.

Mr Chairperson,

I would like to ask that this statement be designed an official document of this Council session and posted on both the external server and public website.

I thank you.