

**STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**  
**BY H.E. MARGARETA KASSANGANA**  
**PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF POLAND TO THE OPCW**  
**AT THE 108th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**  
**(The Hague, 4 - 7 March 2025)**

**Agenda item 5: General debate**

Mr. Chairperson,

Director-General,

Distinguished guests,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU).

Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, North Macedonia, Norway, Republic of Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

The European Union commends the Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Andrés Terán Parral of Ecuador, for his wise stewardship and assure him of our full support in steering the work of the 108<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Council. The European Union also wishes to express its full confidence in the Secretariat and commends the effective leadership of OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias. We welcome the confirmations that the Secretariat is monitoring all relevant situations and any allegations of use of chemical weapons that could arise, and stands ready to assist, if requested, in accordance with the Convention.

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union welcomes the presence of Minister for Foreign Affairs Asaad Hassan al-Shibani on behalf of the Syrian transitional authorities in the Executive Council as a timely opportunity to be advised about the legitimate expectations, as well as expressions of support, for Syria's early return to full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Following the fall of Assad's regime in Syria, the European Union stresses the historic opportunity to reunite the country and underlines the importance of an inclusive and Syrian-led political process that meet the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, in the spirit of the core principles of the UN Security Council Resolution 2254. The EU also emphasises the importance of the verified destruction of Syria's remaining chemical weapons stocks. In this context, The EU Heads of State and Government in their Summit on 19 December 2024 invited the European Commission and High Representative Kallas to submit to the EU Council of Ministers options for measures to support the destruction of chemical weapons stocks. Several

EU Member States are also considering contributing to this common effort and we invite all States parties to do so too.

In this new context, the European Union commends Director-General Arias for his initiative to visit Damascus on 8 February 2025 and seize the opportunity for a renewed effort to clarify the full extent of the Assad regime's chemical weapons programme. We call on the Syrian authorities to grant access to Syrian territory to all the OPCW established mechanisms and make sure that all the chemical weapons stockpiles and sites are secured. The collaboration will make it possible to mitigate the risk of proliferation, and destroy the remaining stocks of chemical weapons, which constitute a concrete threat to international peace and stability.

Mr. Chairperson,

Today, more than 3 years since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, the European Union reiterates its resolute condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a manifest violation of international law including the UN Charter, and reaffirms its continued support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. We reconfirm the EU's unwavering commitment to providing continued political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes. Russia must not prevail.

Ignoring the legitimate international concern, Russia has not provided a plausible answer pursuant to Article IX of the Convention on the growing number of reported uses of Riot Control Agents (RCA) as a method of warfare by its forces in Ukraine. Instead, it continues to evade providing clarifications and distorts facts with disinformation.

Furthermore, the EU expresses deep concern regarding the findings of the second OPCW Technical Assistance Visit (TAV) report issued on 14 February 2025. The report confirms the presence of riot control agent "CS" in samples collected in the battlefield in Ukraine in three incidents in October 2024. Taken together with the first TAV report, the results point to a pattern of riot control use as a method of warfare in the frontlines in Ukraine. Such use is prohibited under Article 1 of the Convention. The EU commends Ukraine for cooperating with the OPCW on this issue and providing samples in line with international standards related to sample collection, preservation and transportation. In light of the seriousness of the situation and to enhance the global norm against the use of chemical weapons, the European Union calls for a timely attribution of the proven use of riot control agents as a method of warfare.

The international community also still awaits a credible response from Russia regarding the poisoning of Mr. Alexei Navalny in August 2020. The European Union hence calls on Russia to allow an independent and transparent international investigation into his sudden death on 16 February 2024 as well as the assassination attempt on his life with a nerve agent of the Novichok group.

Chairperson,

The international non-proliferation and disarmament architecture - including the global norm against the use of chemical weapons - is being tested. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the Secretariat remains fit for purpose and able to fulfil its tasks. The retention and transfer of knowledge, skills and expertise including through rehiring on an exceptional basis is critical to ensuring the Secretariat's capacity to respond to contingencies.

In this context, we commend efforts, and emphasise the need for further progress, towards gender equality in the Organisation and for a more geographically diverse and representative Secretariat, while securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, and look forward to further progress in enhancing gender mainstreaming and the sharing of the results with States Parties.

In concluding, I am pleased to recall the EU's voluntary contribution of EUR 1.6 million for sustaining and building of the Secretariat's capabilities to investigate allegations of use of chemical weapons. The implementation is progressing well and the enhanced Secretariat capacity to investigate allegations of chemical weapons use will be at the disposal of all State Parties.

Thank you.

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