



*The Permanent Representation of Italy to the
Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons*

ITALY

**STATEMENT BY THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR HE GIORGIO NOVELLO
AT THE 108th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chair,

Italy fully align itself to the EU statement and I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

First and foremost, allow me to express my sincere gratitude to you as Chairperson of the Executive Council for your dedication and professionalism. A special thanks also goes to the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his continuous and tireless commitment to promoting the tasks of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Italy is closely monitoring the political developments in Syria. We welcome the Director-General's visit to Damascus on February 8 and his meeting with the Syrian Foreign Minister. We consider it significant that the Syrian President participated in the talks and a senior official of the Damascus Government has been appointed to maintain relations with the OPCW.

After more than a decade of uncertainties and lack of transparency, this prompt response to the Director-General's visit gives us hope regarding Syria's willingness to fully comply with the Convention. We warmly welcome this historic opportunity, which could finally allow us to close a painful chapter in recent history of the OPCW. However, closing this chapter must not stop investigations into accountability for the use of chemical weapons against the Syrian population, both in the cases already certified and in those that may emerge in the future.

We welcome the first visit of a member of the "Investigation and Identification Team" to Syria. This is a highly significant event, made possible thanks to the efforts of the Director-General and the cooperation of the new Syrian leadership. It is now essential to proceed quickly and professionally, as the risk of proliferation remain a serious threat.

Italy recognizes the importance of ensuring the OPCW has the financial and professional resources needed to undertake this new and challenging task. For this reason, we express our support for the draft Decision on the tenure policy and call on

all States Parties to provide financial support, both in the context of the upcoming biennial budget and through voluntary contributions.

Alongside these encouraging developments, we are already at the third anniversary of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. We strongly reiterate our condemnation of the unjustified aggression, which is contrary to international law and the most basic norms of coexistence among States. Once again, we call on the Russian Federation to immediately withdraw its armed forces from Ukrainian territory.

We express our deep concern regarding the findings of the latest Technical Secretariat report on violations of the Convention in Ukraine. The confirmation of the use of "Riot Control Agents" as a method of warfare in four verified cases in Ukraine is a matter of utmost gravity. We cannot accept violations of the Convention, and appropriate measures must be taken, starting with the answers the Russian Federation must provide to the States Parties that have raised specific questions regarding the use of RCAs as a method of warfare.

Italy will continue to firmly support the work of the OPCW in ensuring the full elimination of the chemical threat. To this end, we share with the Director General our deep attention to the impact of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence on chemical disarmament.

Mr Chair, I would kindly ask this statement be issued as an official document and placed on the OPCW public website

Thank you.