

TÜRKİYE: STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SELÇUK ÜNAL, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE TO THE OPCW AT THE 108th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL UNDER AGENDA ITEM 5 – GENERAL DEBATE

(The Hague, 4-7 March 2025)

Mr. Chair,
Mr. Director-General,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to express my thanks to H.E. Ambassador Andrés Terán Parral of Ecuador for his chairmanship of the Executive Council. I would also like to commend the wise leadership of the Director-General, H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias for his efforts to the OPCW's vision of a world free of chemical weapons.

Mr. Chair,

As a strong pillar of the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, the OPCW continues to play a crucial role against the use and threat of use of chemical weapons and witnesses the 100th anniversary of the Geneva Protocol. While many achievements have been made, the deteriorating international security environment presents growing challenges also to the work of the OPCW.

Mr. Chair,

The fall of the Assad regime marks a new chapter in Syria. It presents a historic opportunity both for the country and the OPCW to close the Syria file once and for all. Türkiye has always expressed its strong support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. It is now more important than ever. We support efforts of the Syrian transitional government to launch an inclusive Syrian-led political process to ensure national unity.

Türkiye, immediately re-opened its Embassy in Damascus and Consulate General in Aleppo. We started consultations to better understand the needs of the Syrian people and assist the Syrian transitional authorities.

From the beginning, Türkiye transmitted the concern of the international community to the new Syrian administration regarding the Assad regime's chemical weapons programme. We welcome remarks by the transitional government on the chemical weapons file. We believe that the Syrian authorities understand the importance of this file.

In this regard, we welcome the presence of H.E. Mr. Asaad al-Shaibani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Syria, at this Executive Council tomorrow as we find it as a historic visit to the OPCW to explain their expectations and the support needed.

We commend Director-General Arias for his visit to Damascus on 8 February 2025 and start a dialogue and share the roadmap for the declaration, verification and destruction of Syria's remaining chemical weapons stocks. Türkiye, like Qatar and the Netherlands, also made efforts to make this visit to happen. We also commend the State of Qatar for temporarily assuming the

role to represent Syria's interests at the OPCW. We welcome the appointment of a focal point, Mr. Ibrahim Olabi, by the new Syrian administration.

Today and tomorrow is a historic moment for the organization. Türkiye stood on the right side of history and has always helped the Syrian people for this day to come.

Today, we would like to underline the importance of engagement with and providing support to the Syrian transitional authorities for the success of their cooperation. Syria needs capacity-building. This is key. In addition, TS should be supported by all States Parties as well.

Türkiye is totally against Israel's air strikes targeting Syria's infrastructure and its occupation. This is dangerous at this critical juncture. As our President announced yesterday, those would like to destabilize Syria should not be successful.

On another armed conflict in that region, we would like to repeat that what Israel is doing in Palestine is unacceptable. Our views are well known. We call on the TS to continue to monitor the security situation in Gaza, Palestine, particularly the alleged use and threat of use of chemical weapons by Israel on the Palestinian people.

Mr. Chair,

We note the second OPCW Technical Assistance Visit report issued on 14 February 2025.

On this occasion, I would like to reaffirm Türkiye's commitment to territorial integrity of Ukraine and a just and lasting peace in Ukraine. Our past and present efforts to this end are well known, ongoing and will continue. US and Russian technical delegations once again met in Türkiye recently.

Mr. Chair,

We should answer the calls of the TS which has confirmed multiple times that it needs the retention and transfer of knowledge, skills and expertise to fulfil its tasks. We support the draft decision on amendment of the OPCW tenure policy to allow the rehiring on an exceptional basis. It is still not enough. We believe this will contribute particularly to the work of the OPCW Syria missions.

Taking note of the Secretariat's Note on Global Conference on AI in Rabat and thanking Morocco, Türkiye also welcomes the work of the Secretariat to understand the opportunities and challenges of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence in terms of implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We welcome the establishment of the Temporary Working Group on AI of the Scientific Advisory Board in January 2025. We stand ready to contribute to the activities of this working group.

Mr. Chair,

Türkiye will continue to support the work of the OPCW and cooperate with the States Parties and the Secretariat bilaterally and regionally. Taking this opportunity, I would like to refer to the Third International CBRN Congress which was held by AFAD, Türkiye's disaster agency, on 20-22 November 2024 in Ankara, Türkiye.

Thank you.