

Statement by H. E. Ambassador Ilze Rūse, Permanent Representative of Latvia to the OPCW at the 87th session of the Executive Council

Mr. Chairperson, Director General, Dear colleagues,

Latvia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Ambassador of Bulgaria H.E Krassimir Kostov on behalf of the European Union and aligned countries and would like to stress the following.

We thank Director General Mr Üzümcü for his statement and commend the OPCW and its staff for continuous work in carrying out its functions under the convention. It is deeply regrettable that the international community has been confronted with the use of CW for over a century. Here I would like to refer to the opening statement by the Director General, indicating that Latvia has recently informed the Technical Secretariat of the recovery of possible OCW – old chemical weapons on its territory.

I would like to reconfirm that Latvia has indeed found munition that is supposedly a remnant from the World War I and considered as old chemical weapons under the convention. Using this opportunity Latvia would like to express gratitude to the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW for a professional and swift set up of a Technical Assistance Visit to Latvia later this month.

Mr. Chairperson,

With respect to the recent shocking events in Salisbury on March 4, Latvia is very concerned about the recent use of the nerve agent, a chemical weapon, in United Kingdom. Ministry of Foreign affairs of Latvia has issued a statement condemning this flagrant crime. We express our full support to our British partners and trust the expertise of British Government to lead a thorough investigation. The perpetrators of this atrocious and cowardly act must be brought to justice.

This also once again highlights the relevance of the Convention and the need to further implement and fully adhere to its principles. The breaches of the Chemical Weapons Convention by Syrian Arab Republic is unacceptable and deserve a strong condemnation and response from the international community. In this respect, I would like to highlight that Latvia fully supports the persistent work of the Declaration Assessment Team on the initial declaration by the Syrian Arab Republic. Unresolved issues need to be thoroughly addressed.

In the grim light of recent allegations of use of chemical weapons in Syria, we see it is also paramount to continue the important work of the Fact Finding Mission in Syria. We express our full support to the continued efforts of the FFM. International community must continue to work tirelessly and use all the tools available, including supporting UN efforts, to prevent the use of chemical weapons ever again.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman