



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Twenty-Sixth Session
29 November – 2 December 2021

C-26/NAT.83
29 November 2021
ENGLISH and SPANISH only

SPAIN

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE KINGDOM OF SPAIN TO THE
OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE
STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,

Spain aligns itself with the statement of the European Union at this Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

This year, the Conference will once again take place under very difficult conditions resulting from the pandemic that has affected us for nearly two years now. For this reason, my delegation would like to express its special appreciation to the Director-General, Mr Fernando Arias, and to the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their work over all these months and for maintaining the operations of the Organisation under such complicated circumstances. My delegation also welcomes the initiatives of the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat towards achieving gender parity within the director levels of the Organisation, as well as fostering work-family balance and gender mainstreaming across all levels at the OPCW.

My delegation also expresses its appreciation for the efforts of the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mexico, Mr José Antonio Zabalgaitia, Chairperson of the previous Conference, and welcomes Mr Bård Ivar Svendsen, Ambassador of Norway, as Chairperson of this session of the Conference; we wish him every success.

Spain reiterates its full confidence in the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW. Their professionalism, impartiality, independence, and technical competence is beyond any doubt and, as a consequence, my delegation rejects the unfounded criticism and attacks that the Technical Secretariat is receiving from some Member States.

Spain reiterates that the use of chemical weapons by a State or any other entity is unacceptable anywhere, at any time, and under any circumstances. It not only constitutes a violation of the Convention that everyone present here voluntarily accepted, but it is also a grave attack on human rights. For this reason, the perpetrators of any attack involving chemical weapons must answer for their actions and be brought to justice.

It is with profound concern that Spain has followed the attack suffered by Mr Alexei Navalny in August 2020 on the territory of the Russian Federation, in which a novichok chemical agent was used. At the time, Spain urged the Russian Federation to investigate in-depth the facts and circumstances leading up to this attack and to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation with the aim of fully clarifying this regrettable incident.



Nevertheless, in spite of the calls of numerous Member States and the various formal initiatives presented at the heart of the Organisation, the Russian Federation still has not provided a definitive explanation of the facts and circumstances associated with this attack. In fact, it withdrew its request for technical assistance within the scope of the Convention that it had previously submitted to the Technical Secretariat to investigate the case.

Spain trusts that the Russian authorities, in cooperation with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, will investigate the background of this attack and offer the international community the clarifications and explanations that it demands. This is the reason why my country has supported and co-sponsored the various actions taken so that the Russian Federation will collaborate faithfully with the OPCW Technical Secretariat to clarify this matter.

Spain condemns the chemical weapons attacks in the Syrian Arab Republic and demands that the perpetrators and those responsible for these unacceptable acts answer for their crimes as soon as possible and be tried in court. In line with the contents of the first of the reports issued by the Investigation and Identification Team of the OPCW, the responsibility of the Syrian governmental authorities in the use of chemical weapons against its own people has been proven in the attack that took place in Ltamenah in March 2017.

The contents of the second report by the Investigation and Identification Team of the OPCW also left no room for doubt. This serious and thorough work by the Technical Secretariat brings to light the responsibility of the Syrian authorities for the attacks that took place in Saraqib on 4 February 2018.

Syria continues not to fulfil its mandate as imposed by the decision of the Executive Council this past 9 July 2020, which was co-sponsored by Spain and a broad group of countries. The decision concerns Syria's use of chemical weapons and the suspension of its voting rights within the Organisation. My delegation urges the Syrian authorities to strictly comply with the terms of said decision.

Spain fully supports the sanctions that the European Union has imposed on a significant number of Syrian officials and scientists for their responsibility in the development, production, and use of chemical weapons. Spain will also support as many future actions as are necessary to definitively eradicate chemical weapons from this country.

My delegation trusts that this Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties will definitively adopt the draft decision on the non-medical and non-scientific use of central nervous system-acting chemicals within the fentanyl group. Spain previously co-sponsored an initiative that would see the inclusion of these agents in the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention as a significant step forward in the eradication of chemical weapons.

In this first phase of the Conference of the States Parties, the most important item on the agenda will be the adoption of the biennial Budget for the years 2022 – 2023. This is the first time that the Organisation has submitted a biennial budget to the Conference. It is an important step, as it contributes to the OPCW's financial security and dispels uncertainties, while reasonably guaranteeing that the Organisation will be able to continue to carry out its inspection, verification, and control missions over the two years ahead.

My delegation supports the draft presented by the Director-General, Fernando Arias, and will vote in support of it. Spain requests that all States Parties give their approval. It is a balanced and austere budget, in line with the economic circumstances that we are experiencing and, at

the same time, it will allow the Organisation to continue with its work over the course of 2022 and 2023. Spain believes that the OPCW is a basic, fundamental tool within the global non-proliferation mechanism and, as a consequence, will continue to offer its support in future via its regular and voluntary contributions, and urges the rest of the Member States to take on a similar attitude.

My delegation would like to request that this statement be considered an official document of the Conference and published on the external server and the Organisation's website.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

--- 0 ---