



Embassy of Finland
The Hague

Finland
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Ilkka-Pekka Similä
Permanent Representative of Finland to the OPCW
At the 108th Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW

“Read out verbatim”

Mr. Chair, Mr. Director-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finland aligns itself with the statement made by Poland on behalf of the European Union. In addition, we wish to highlight a few issues from a national perspective.

We thank H.E. Ambassador Andrés Teran Parral of Ecuador for his efforts as the Chair of the Executive Council and assure him of our full support. We also extend our appreciation to Director-General Fernando Arias and his staff. Finland once more reiterates its full confidence in the expertise, professionalism and impartiality of the Secretariat.

Mr. Chair,

Finland welcomes the presence of (Minister for Foreign Affairs Asaad Hassan al-Shibani on behalf of) the Syrian transitional authorities in the Executive Council. We look forward to being advised about Syria's plans and path to full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We welcome Syria's renewed collaboration with the OPCW and commend the Director-General for his initiative to visit Damascus on 8 February. In the new context, it is important to first clarify the full extent of the Assad regime's chemical weapons program and to make sure that all chemical weapons stockpiles and sites are secured. We call on Syria to continue its collaboration with the OPCW. We underline the importance of granting all OPCW investigation mechanisms unhindered access to Syrian territory as

well as the importance of destroying Syria's remaining chemical weapons stocks, which constitute a concrete threat to international peace and stability.

Mr. Chair,

Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine has continued for over three years. Finland condemns the unjustified and illegal war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The Russian invasion of a sovereign country is a violation of international law, including the UN Charter.

We reiterate our unwavering support to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as its right to self-defence. Russia must immediately cease its military actions, withdraw its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine and respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognised borders.

On 14 February, the OPCW issued a report on the second Technical Assistance Visit to Ukraine. The Report confirms the presence of the riot control agent known as "CS" in the samples collected in the battlefield in Ukraine in relation to three incidents in October 2024. The findings of the first and second report of the Technical Assistance Visits taken together confirm a pattern of riot control use as a method of warfare in the frontlines in Ukraine.

Russia's repeated use of riot control agents as a method of warfare, as well as its use of other chemical munitions against the Armed Forces of Ukraine, is in blatant violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Finland condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's use of chemical agents in Ukraine and calls on Russia to strictly comply with its obligations under the Convention.

Pursuant to Article IX of the Convention, twelve States Parties have requested the Executive Council to assist in clarifying the use of riot control agents as a method of warfare in Ukraine. Russia has not provided plausible answer to the request instead it evades providing clarifications and continues to disseminate disinformation.

Mr. Chair,

For almost five years, the international community has been waiting for a credible response from Russia regarding poisoning of Mr. Alexei Navalny in August 2020. Finland

once more repeats its call on Russia to investigate the assassination attempt in full transparency and without further delay.

Mr. Chair,

The international non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, including the global norm against the use of chemical weapons, is at a crossroads. Under the challenging context, it is very important that the OPCW is able to implement its mandate. The retention and transfer of knowledge, expertise and skills through rehiring of qualified staff members on an exceptional basis is of utmost importance to ensure that the Secretariat remains fit for purpose.

To conclude, we wish to express our appreciation and strong support to the Director-General's efforts towards gender equality in the Organization. We emphasize the need for further progress in gender mainstreaming at the OPCW and for a more geographically diverse and representative Secretariat while securing highest standards of effectiveness, efficiency, competence and integrity.

I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on Catalyst and public website.