



Statement by Ambassador Erling Rimestad
Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Norway
to the 108th session of the Executive Council of the OPCW
Item 5 - General Debate

Chair,

Mr. Director-General,

Distinguished Colleagues,

Norway aligns itself with the statement made by Ambassador Kassangana on behalf of the European Union. I would like to add the following in my national capacity.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is fundamental to international security and the rules-based multilateral order. Norway remains unwavering in the preservation and promotion of the order developed to ensure past atrocities may never be repeated. It is time to remind ourselves that rules must be applied even in conflict, and that they apply to all, without exception. Those who violate international law must be held to account.

Norway has repeatedly condemned the use of chemical weapons, be it in Syria, Iraq, Malaysia, Russia, Ukraine or the United Kingdom. We welcome the OPCW's monitoring of the situation in Gaza, and we note with great concern reports alleging the use of missiles containing toxic gas in Sudan.

Chair,

The fall of the Assad-regime in Syria has opened a window of opportunity for Syria to comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We are pleased to welcome to this session of the Executive Council the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Asaad Hassan al-Shibani, on behalf of the transitional authorities in Syria. The OPCW's early assistance in locating and securing any chemical weapon stockpiles and sites is important. We urge the transitional authorities to cooperate closely with the Technical Secretariat.

Norway is considering ways in which we can support the OPCW mission in Syria.

Chair,

Norway unequivocally condemns Russia's unprovoked and unjustifiable war of aggression in Ukraine. Two OPCW Technical Assistance Visit reports confirm the presence of the riot control agent [(RCA) CS in and from RG-Vo grenades] on the battlefield in Ukraine. As stated by the Director-General, the use of riot control agents as a method of warfare is tantamount to chemical weapons use. We strongly condemn Russia's use of chemical weapons in Ukraine. We are also deeply disturbed by reports of Russia using the pulmonary agent chloropicrin as a chemical weapon in Ukraine. Russia's actions constitute a blatant disregard for international law including the CWC.

Clear violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention must be confronted. Russia must be held to account for its attempts to normalise the use of Chemical Weapons contrary to international law and norms.

Russia has a track record of failing to credibly account for its use of chemical weapons. We saw this after the attack in the United Kingdom in 2018 and the attempted assassination of Mr. Alexei Navalny on its own territory in August 2020. Instead, Russia has repeatedly spread unsubstantiated allegations and engaged in extensive disinformation campaigns aimed at sowing confusion or discrediting the OPCW. We reiterate our calls on Russia to provide immediate, full and complete disclosure of its Novichok programme to the OPCW, and to meaningfully account for the reports on Russia's use of riot control agents in Ukraine.

We urge the Technical Secretariat to further examine any evidence of use of chemical weapons in Ukraine through forensic and other means to support possible future attribution.

Chair,

It is our shared responsibility that the OPCW is fit for purpose, both for present and future challenges. We welcome the draft decision to allow rehiring of experienced professional staff. We must jointly ensure that women are part of decision-making bodies at all levels, and that the rights and needs of women are recognized in the work of the OPCW, in line with Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Norway has full confidence in the professionalism, expertise and impartiality of the Technical Secretariat. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Director-General Fernando Arias and his entire team for their tireless efforts in working towards a world free of chemical weapons.

[I would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document of the Twenty-Ninth Session of the conference of the States Parties and post in on the OPCW external server and public website.]