

Statement on Russia's CW-related allegations towards Ukraine

To be delivered at the 99th session of the Executive Council under Agenda Item 7 (e)
“Addressing the threat from chemical weapons use”

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of 49 States Parties; namely Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cook Islands, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

In recent days, we have witnessed Russia invading its neighbour Ukraine in gross violation of international law. We strongly condemn the military aggression by the Russian Federation against the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. This unprovoked and completely unjustified attack on the democratic state of Ukraine was preceded by fabricated claims and unfounded allegations.

We find it particularly intolerable that Russia, as part of the propaganda that prepared this attack, made the unsubstantiated claim that Ukraine was preparing aggressive action in the Donbas region which would have been contrary to its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. I refer to a statement by Russian Defense Minister Shoigu of 21 December in which he claimed that “for the purpose of carrying out acts of provocation, reserves of an unidentified chemical component have been delivered” to eastern Ukraine. Repetitions of this false allegation and further insinuations about chemical weapons in Ukraine have been made in Russian state media and by Russian-backed separatists. In this context we note with concern Note Verbale No. 61219/30-196/50-3 of the Permanent Representation of Ukraine to the OPCW dated 27 February 2022.

We strongly condemn Russia's behaviour. We consider it unacceptable to levy such false accusations against Ukraine, a State Party in good standing.

This behaviour is in stark contrast to Russia's continued refusal to investigate the well-documented use of a chemical weapon on its territory in the poisoning of the Russian opposition leader Mr Alexei Navalny. It is Russia, not Ukraine, which is not fulfilling its obligations. We recall that Russia is obliged under Article VII of the Convention to criminalise the use of chemical weapons on its territory by natural and legal persons, and

consequently to investigate and punish any suspected use of chemical weapons on its territory.

We re-affirm our commitment to upholding the Convention, to supporting the work of the OPCW, and to bringing to account those who use chemical weapons.

I request this statement to be considered as an official document of this session of the Executive Council and to be posted on Catalyst as well as on the OPCW public website.