

Joint Statement on Russian action in the OPCW with regard to Ukraine

To be delivered at the 27th session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC under Agenda Item 9 (d) “Addressing the threat from chemical weapons use”

Mr. Chairperson, Director General, distinguished delegates,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of 54 States Parties from all five regional groups; namely

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

For more than nine months Ukraine has been the victim of a brutal war of aggression launched by its neighbour Russia. Russia’s war is a serious breach of international law, including the UN Charter. Russia’s conduct raises serious questions with regard to Russia’s obligations and responsibilities as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Russia’s reckless military attacks on and around civil chemical facilities constitute a direct threat to the civil population and to the environment. We urgently call upon Russia to stop the shelling of civilian infrastructure. We recall that any toxic chemical used to cause death, temporary incapacitation or permanent harm to humans or animals would constitute the use of a chemical weapon.

Russia has made repeated unsubstantiated claims that Ukraine is using or is preparing to use chemical agents in Ukraine. Russia has sent a volley of diplomatic notes to the Technical Secretariat for distribution to States Parties, with at least 20 of them containing claims about alleged Ukrainian plans to use chemical weapons or toxic chemical substances. There has not been a single case in which any credible evidence has been presented. Nor has there been any case where these allegations turned out to be correct or the predicted events actually and verifiably happened.

We judge that Russia made these claims with the sole purpose of trying to justify its war of aggression. There is no substance behind these claims. They are part of an elaborate, malicious disinformation campaign launched by Russia both prior to the attack on Ukraine and afterwards, encompassing untrue allegations regarding chemical, biological and radiological weapons.

We find it particularly disturbing that Russia has also attacked the Technical Secretariat with unfounded claims that it was being used as part of planned “provocations” aimed at falsely accusing Russia of using chemical weapons, as expressed in Note Verbale No. 29 of the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation, dated 9 June 2022. Again without presenting any evidence, Russia has been questioning the impartiality and independence of the Secretariat. We reaffirm our full support for the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat in implementing the provisions of the Convention in line with the highest international standards of professionalism and impartiality.

We consider Russia’s behaviour to constitute an abuse of its responsibilities as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Malicious, unfounded accusations against another State Party in good standing and of the Technical Secretariat without presenting any evidence are utterly unacceptable. They are an insult to all States Parties that comply with their obligations in good faith, destroy trust among States Parties and undermine the global ban against chemical weapons that we are all committed to upholding. We call upon Russia to stop this abusive behaviour immediately.

We kindly request that this statement be considered as an official document of this Conference session and posted on both the external server and the public website.