

Joint Statement on the Tragic Death of Aleksey Navalny

This statement is on behalf of 47 co-sponsors: Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and the United States of America

We, as States Parties of the Chemical Weapons Convention, express our shock at the news of the tragic death of 47-year-old Aleksey Navalny in a Russian prison. We support the UN Secretary-General's call for a "full, credible and transparent investigation into the circumstances of Mr. Navalny's reported death in custody."

We recall that the OPCW Technical Secretariat provided technical assistance to analysis of biomedical samples from Mr. Navalny's poisoning in Russia on 20 August 2020. The OPCW's analysis confirmed the presence of a cholinesterase inhibitor. The cholinesterase inhibitor was identified as a nerve agent from a group of chemicals known as "Novichoks." We once again condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon in the Russian Federation against Mr. Navalny.

On 5 October 2021, 45 States Parties posed questions to the Russian Federation pursuant to Article IX, paragraph 2 of the Convention, which provides that any State Party may seek clarification from another State Party on any matter which may cause doubt about compliance with the Convention, or which gives rise to concerns about a related matter which may be considered ambiguous. A State Party receiving such a request has an obligation to respond within 10 days with information sufficient to answer the doubt or concern. The Russian Federation's response on 7 October 2021 did not answer the simple questions posed. On 5 November 2021, the 45 States Parties responded to the Russian Federation and repeated the questions but have not received a substantive response since then.

The use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances is unacceptable and contravenes international standards and norms against such use. States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention have repeatedly condemned all use of chemical weapons and reiterated their commitment to the prohibition against the use of chemical weapons under Article I of the Convention. The use of a chemical weapon constitutes a direct threat to the object and purpose of the Convention.

With the untimely and tragic passing of Mr. Navalny, we once again urge the Russian Federation to provide the necessary clarification in response to Article IX questions posed in October 2021 and in accordance with its obligations under the Convention. The death of Mr. Navalny does not relieve the Russian Federation of its obligation to provide answers to the questions posed. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

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