



REGERINGSKANSLIET

Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden

Statement by Sweden Twenty-Eighth Conference of the States Parties of the Chemical Weapons Convention

H.E. Mr. Johannes Oljelund

27 November 2023

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Sweden fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I wish to add a few remarks on behalf of my country.

Let me start by welcoming you, Ambassador, as Chairperson of the Twenty-Eighth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. I assure you of the full support of my delegation. I also wish to thank Ambassador Lucian Fatu for his efforts in the preparations for this session of the conference as Chairperson of the Executive Council.

I want to extend Sweden's warm thanks to Director-General Fernando Arias and the Technical Secretariat for their untiring and professional work in ensuring the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, despite very challenging circumstances, and to reiterate our confidence in the OPCW's professionalism, impartiality and expertise.

Chair,

Russia's unlawful and unjustified invasion of Ukraine continues, with attacks on Ukraine's industrial infrastructure, including chemical industrial plants, and with severe risks for human and ecological disaster. We also note with great concern reports indicating the use of riot control agents on the battlefield by Russian military. Such use is prohibited under Article I of the Convention. We condemn Russia's illegal aggression and its continuous disinformation campaign. Sweden stands firm in its support to Ukraine.

Chair,

It is clear we continue to face serious challenges to the international rules prohibiting the use of chemical weapons.

The Syrian Arab Republic remains in breach of its commitments as a State Party to the Convention. Instead of taking steps to redress the situation, the Syrian regime keeps obstructing OPCW's efforts to investigate and establish accountability for chemical weapons use on its territory, and by not approving visas for all members of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT).

Russian authorities have, so far, failed to respond to demands of the international community to disclose the circumstances around the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny, over three years ago.

For any responsible States Party to the Convention, it should be a priority to ensure that perpetrators of chemical weapons use are identified and held to account. Impunity can never be an option. These serious issues will continue to be on top of our agenda until all questions are answered and those responsible are brought to justice.

Chair,

In these bleak circumstances, we do have one clear achievement to celebrate. Last July we welcomed the completion of the verified destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles. This marks a significant milestone in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and international disarmament efforts.

To ensure the OPCW can continue its important work to support the implementation of the Convention, predictable and sufficient funding is essential. Sweden welcomes the decision of the Executive Council to recommend the proposed Programme and Budget for 2024-25 to this session of the conference. I would like to thank the Technical Secretariat and the co-facilitators for their dedicated work and urge all States Parties to support the proposed budget. Given the current financial challenges, we also urge the Technical Secretariat to continue to practise a strict budgetary discipline.

Chair,

It is Sweden's conviction that a gender equality perspective on all aspects of our collective work will strengthen international peace and security. We appreciate the efforts made by the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat to enhance women's equal participation and representation among its staff and strengthen gender mainstreaming holistically across the Organisation and its activities. We look forward to further steps to address the gaps and challenges that remain.

Lastly, Sweden welcomes the participation of representatives from the civil society at this Twenty-Eighth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and regrets that not all that applied were allowed to participate. NGOs play a key role in our common strive towards a world free from chemical weapons. It is vital that the OPCW remains true to its fundamental values of openness and transparency.

I thank you Chair and ask that this statement be issued a public document of the Twenty-Eighth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and published on the OPCW external website.