

482 words, 3.5 mins

Chair,

The global conventions to prohibit chemical and biological weapons are foundational pillars in our non-proliferation architecture.

Let me therefore reiterate what was stated in the General Debate:

We cannot allow these pillars to be eroded by blatant violations, nor allow the conventions to become arenas for false accusations.

Lately, we have seen Russia make unfounded allegations of biological weapons programmes in Ukraine. Russia has done so in the Security Council, but also by triggering article V of the Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention (BTWC).

It is intolerable to use the mechanism to assail international assistance encouraged under Article X, which is a cornerstone of this convention.

We know, better than ever, that cross border cooperation is crucial in strengthening our collective resilience to biological threats.

It is therefore imperative that we speak out forcefully and resolutely against attempts to falsely frame peaceful cooperation and assistance activities as a form of non-compliance.

Chair,

Norway remains steadfastly confident in the work of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and its Director General.

We firmly reject any efforts to discredit their important work.

The OPCW and the UN have together attributed eight cases of use of chemical weapons to Syrian authorities and two cases to the so-called Islamic State.

We remain deeply concerned about the continued failure of the Syrian Arab Republic to close the 20 outstanding issues from its initial declaration on its chemical weapons programme.

Norway supports the decision made at the CWC states parties meeting last year to suspend certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic.

We continue to urge the Russian Federation to conduct a thorough investigation of the circumstances surrounding the poisoning of Mr. Alexei Navalny, share the findings of the investigation with states parties to the CWC and bring those responsible to justice.

Following the Russian aggression against Ukraine, Norway has joined the EU in sanctioning Russia. This includes a ban on exporting chemicals that can be misused for manufacturing chemical weapons.

The independence of the UN Secretary General's Mechanism for the investigation of alleged uses of chemical, biological or toxin weapons must be preserved.

Its impartiality and independence are essential.

The Secretary General has ample opportunity to update the guidelines for the mechanism, should he see the need.

Norway therefore sees no reason for member states to initiate an update procedure, as is proposed in one resolution.

Chair,

For the upcoming Review Conferences of the Biological- and the Chemical Weapons Conventions respectively, we should move beyond the bare minimum of reaffirming our commitment to them. Compliance is key to uphold the strength and credibility of the conventions, and concrete actions to assure compliance is needed.

At the same time, we must define practical ways to increase international cooperation and assistance - in tandem with scientific and technological developments.

This work will require strong partnerships with civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders.

Thank you.