Mr. Chairman,

Latvia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and the statement to be delivered by France on behalf of the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. I would like to make the following remarks in national capacity.

In recent years the Chemical Weapons Convention has been challenged on number of occasions. The reckless use of chemical weapons in Syria, Iraq, Malaysia and most recently, in the United Kingdom, is a testimony to the gross violation of the international norms stipulated in the Chemical Weapons Convention. It poses a serious threat to the rules based international order and global non-proliferation and disarmament regime that we have committed to protect and strengthen.

Latvia reaffirms its condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the use of chemical weapons by state and non-state actors, under any circumstances. No one and nowhere should ever be exposed to such horrendous attacks and threats. Hence, it is our duty and responsibility to uphold the longstanding international norm against the use of chemical weapons.

We are dismayed by the attempted cyber-attack against the OPCW in April this year. Attempts to undermine the global norm against the use of chemical weapons and to interfere with the work of the OPCW and its investigative mechanisms must be strongly opposed and deterred. We support the intention of the OPCW to strengthen its capabilities in this regard. Latvia also welcomes the steps taken by the host country of the OPCW, The Netherlands, to avert these actions.

Mr. Chairman,

We deeply regret that it was not possible to renew the mandate of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism last November. In light of that, Latvia welcomes
the decision adopted at the Fourth Special Conference of the State Parties of Chemical Weapons Convention, which enhances the capacity of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to work on the attribution of the crimes committed. As the next regular Conference of States parties of the Chemical Weapons Convention is approaching, Latvia wishes to lend its support to the efforts of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW in implementing the decision.

Latvia also supports and has joined the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons that unites already thirty nine countries from different geographical regions. United and coordinated multilateral action is the only way forward to tackle effectively the threats of weapons of mass destruction. In this regard, Latvia also welcomes the adoption of a new EU autonomous sanctions regime specifically designed to fighting the proliferation of chemical weapons and their precursors.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, it is the duty and responsibility of the international community to ensure that the use of chemical weapons does not become a norm and that the perpetrators of these heinous crimes are brought to justice.

Latvia remains strongly committed to the principles of the Chemical Weapons Convention and expect no less from other States Parties.