



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF AUSTRALIA, CANADA AND NEW ZEALAND (CANZ)
AT THE TWENTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

AGENDA SUBITEM 9(D): ADDRESSING THE THREAT FROM CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE

Thank you, Chair. I have the honour of addressing the Conference today under this agenda item on behalf of the Governments of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

Despite the passing of another full year since we last gathered for this Conference, we deplore that Russia continues to disregard its international obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and the United Nations Charter. Since last year's Conference, Russia has only intensified its efforts to further challenge the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons.

Let's examine the list of Russia's violations. It is long, but we will try to keep to time limits.

The Russian Federation has conducted attacks using chemical weapons agents in the attempted assassinations of Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom and of Alexei Navalny on Russia's own territory. Instead of cooperating with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation into the assassination attempt, Russia still has not answered questions posed over four years ago by 45 States Parties regarding the poisoning of Mr. Navalny with a Novichok agent. The death of Mr. Navalny while in a Russian prison does not mean Russia is absolved of responsibility to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat, investigate, and report honestly on the circumstances surrounding this use of a chemical weapon on its own territory.

Chair, last week solemnly marked 1,000 days since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Canada, Australia, and New Zealand reiterate our condemnation of Russia's illegal and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine, which violates international law and the UN Charter, that has been punctuated by repeated credible reports of Russia's use of riot control agents on the battlefield. Alarming, last week's report of the OPCW on its Article VIII Technical Assistance Visit (TAV) to Ukraine has confirmed that a grenade containing the riot control agent CS was used on the battlefield in Ukraine. The use of riot control agents as a method of warfare is strictly prohibited under the Convention. We also note with concern the allegations that Russia has used scheduled chemical substances in its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. We condemn the reported use of choking agent Chloropicrin. Such reported use of toxic chemicals as weapons is representative of Russia's utter contempt for its obligations

under the Convention. We again call on Russia to credibly respond to the requests submitted under Article IX of the Convention. Russia has, to date, failed to do so.

Chair, we should also point out a disturbing pattern of Russian behaviour at the OPCW. Instead of responding to entirely legitimate questions concerning its actions that were posed in line with the Convention given serious doubt about compliance, Russia continues its malicious efforts to block agenda setting, sow doubt about legitimate process, undermine confidence in the credibility of the OPCW, and draw attention away from its own international obligations, through a concerted disinformation campaign. Such disinformation jeopardizes global security, threatens the global non-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament framework, and represents a direct threat to the object and purpose of the Convention.

In its most recent attempt to spread disinformation and to subvert accountability, Russia has once again circulated another hefty, highly protected document, that they call impartial evidence substantiated by an OPCW-designated laboratory. As the Director-General and Technical Secretariat have previously clarified and as others have noted, that is a mischaracterization of the lab's status in doing this analysis. And unlike the impartial, competent, and transparent analysis of authentic samples carried out independently by two OPCW designated laboratories following the Article VIII TAV to Ukraine, the analysis of the purported samples collected by Russia was not carried out in accordance with OPCW procedures, under the authority of the Director-General, and no chain of custody was maintained. CANZ once again calls on Russia to meet its fundamental international obligations, with transparency, with honesty, and in good faith rather than scapegoating others to distract from its own unlawful conduct. On this the voices of all States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention must be loud and clear.

To close, Chair, Canada, Australia and New Zealand applaud the Technical Secretariat for its proven ability to respond to the needs of States Parties – *all* States Parties – in a timely, transparent, and professional manner, as demonstrated by the recent Technical Assistance Visits to Ukraine. We cannot stand idly by while Russia continues to cast aspersions on the “collective West” and attacks the Secretariat by calling into question its neutrality and impartiality to serve its own geo-political agenda. We stand with the victims of chemical warfare and place our full support behind the Technical Secretariat as it continues its important work to address the threat from chemical weapons use.

Thank you, Chair.