



STATEMENT OF CANADA TO THE TWENTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION (CWC)

DELIVERED BY H.E. MR. HUGH ADSETT, AMBASSADOR OF CANADA TO THE NETHERLANDS AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA TO THE ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS (OPCW)

Distinguished Chair, Director-General, Deputy Director-General, Excellencies, Colleagues,

Canada welcomes the election of His Excellency Mr Almir Šahović, Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as Chair of the 29th Conference of the States Parties to the CWC. The Chair can remain assured of Canada's full support and cooperation. We also thank outgoing Chair, Ambassador Suljuk Mustansar Tarar of Pakistan, for managing the Conference this past year.

In this national statement, we will address the fundamental challenges the Convention is facing, such as Syrian and Russian non-compliance, as well as operational challenges, including gender equality issues, the inclusion of civil society, and the adoption of adjustments to the biennial budget for the year 2025.

Chair,

This is the third Conference of States Parties to be held since the beginning of Russia's illegal and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine. Russia's war of aggression is jeopardizing global peace and security, it is undermining the non-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament regimes, and the work of multilateral bodies like the OPCW.

On November 18th, 2024, the OPCW's report on its Article VIII Technical Assistance Visit to Ukraine confirmed that a grenade containing the riot control agent CS was used against a military trench in territory controlled by Ukrainian forces. While the TAV was not mandated to attribute responsibility for this incident involving the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon, the grenade – collected from a Ukrainian forces trench close to the frontline – bore the signature Russian-language markings "RG-Vo", a known Russian acronym standing for "hand grenade with poisonous substance". Russia purports to be compliant with the CWC and to not have any chemical weapons, but its own state-sponsored media has reported and even boasted that Russian forces use riot control agents against their opponents in Ukraine. When pressed for details about these reports the Russian government refuses to explain. The use of riot control agents as a weapon of war is an unambiguous violation of Article I of the Convention. Other reliable sources assert that



even more deadly chemicals, such as the Scheduled toxic chemical chloropicrin, have also been used as weapons of war by Russia.

Faced with this challenge to the prohibition on the possession and use of chemical weapons, the OPCW has responded. Since July, the Secretariat has made three Technical Assistance Visits to Ukraine to provide protective and detection equipment and training, including the visit which confirmed the use of riot control agents. The Secretariat has also made good use of the ChemTech Centre for training of Ukrainian personnel. We are pleased to have contributed Can\$750,000 to the Article X Ukraine Assistance Fund, assisting the Technical Secretariat in providing chemical identification and detection equipment and associated training to Ukraine.

Chair, a State Party which knowingly violates the Convention and refuses to answer questions to clear its name does not belong on the governing body of the OPCW. As a result, Canada will vote for Czechia and North Macedonia to assume the Eastern European Group's two available seats, in accordance with the majority of group members' wishes.

Furthermore, the attempted assassinations of Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom and Alexei Navalny in Russia with Novichok nerve agents raise even more questions regarding Russia's compliance with the Convention. When we pose these questions to Russia, we don't get reasonable, intelligible, or comprehensive answers, but instead receive deflections or page after page of falsehood.

Disinformation of this type threatens the objectives and purpose of the CWC. To combat disinformation in the CBRN sphere, Canada is spearheading an initiative to Counter WMD Disinformation. This ambitious effort is implemented on behalf of the 31 members of the G7-led Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction and is being delivered in close collaboration with the G7's Rapid Response Mechanism. This comprehensive, coordinated, and multi-institutional initiative aims to aid understanding of the direct and indirect harms of CBRN disinformation and provide tools to counter disinformation narratives pre-emptively. We are pleased to be supporting a side event on this topic on Wednesday.

Chair,

The Technical Secretariat has briefed States Parties on the 19 outstanding issues with Syria's Initial Declaration, many of which are "of serious concern." Canada agrees with this assessment, and until these issues are resolved, we must conclude that the Assad regime maintained an offensive chemical weapons capability after the destruction of its declared



programme and stockpiles. Whether it maintains that capability to this day remains uncertain, though Canada has no confidence in Syrian claims that it has relinquished all its chemical weapons. We will not have confidence, and no State Party can be assured of the Syrian Arab Republic's compliance with the Convention, so long as the basic entry requirement as a State Party – the Initial Declaration – cannot be considered accurate and complete. The Syrian Arab Republic must comply with the Convention. It must resolve all gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies in its Initial Declaration, and it must give the Technical Secretariat access to any place, individuals, items, or information it requires in a full and transparent manner.

The Technical Secretariat also requires the resources it needs to be able to do its work in Syria. Canada is pleased to have been able to provide Can\$1 million to support Syria Missions and a further Can\$390,000 to support profiling of chemical samples.

Chair,

On the topic of gender, the OPCW has taken meaningful steps in improving the full and equal participation and leadership of women in its operations. The gender representation in the Secretariat has improved in general but has regressed at leadership levels. Canada remains aligned with the 59 States which spoke at the 106th session of the Executive Council last July in calling for the Technical Secretariat to continue engaging with States Parties on the issue of gender and on the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda more broadly.

On the issue of civil society engagement, Canada considers contributions from a wide range of civil society actors to greatly improve the implementation of the Convention. Canada supports active participation in the OPCW from a broad and inclusive range of non-governmental participants with the expertise, the accountability, and unique perspectives that help advance our shared objectives.

To this end, Canada believes that this Conference needs a more streamlined and transparent NGO accreditation process. There is room for improvement by learning from experience in the implementation of the current guidelines. We regret that it has not been possible to reach consensus on pragmatic proposals to make the accreditation guidelines more efficient, consistent, and transparent, and that some states have used the status quo to prevent civil society from participating and, consequently, criticizing these states' actions. We look forward to the Co-facilitators' report and recommendations later this week and are proud to co-sponsor a Joint Statement led by the Netherlands which emphasizes the benefits of strengthened dialogue and cooperation with civil society, and



underscores the desire of the vast majority to see enhanced engagement for the benefit of all States Parties and Civil Society.

Finally, Chair,

It is time to adopt the revised programme and budget for the second half of the biennial period. The Technical Secretariat has adjusted the programme to ensure the continued secure functioning of Organisation and reduce the increase in assessed contributions. We were pleased to see this programme and budget adopted by consensus at the Executive Council last month.

We note that the OPCW's ongoing financial challenges are not limited to the effects of inflation. Some are caused by the late, incomplete, or non-payment of assessed contributions. This harms all programs of the OPCW, including efforts to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons and our work on cooperation and assistance. We urge all States Parties to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time.

We note the budget's plan to upgrade physical security at the OPCW Headquarters. Canada has been a major donor to efforts to enhance physical and cyber security at the OPCW, contributing over Can\$4 million since 2019. We are pleased to see security upgrades being funded by assessed contributions, as OPCW security is everyone's responsibility.

Chair,

In conclusion, States Parties can rest assured that Canada will continue to engage constructively and in good faith to ensure that the OPCW's important work in support of the Convention continues and to ensure a future free of chemical weapons.

Thank you.