



**NEW ZEALAND STATEMENT
BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SUSANNAH GORDON PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-NINETH SESSION OF THE
CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

Tena koutou katoa [greetings to you all].

Allow me to begin by congratulating H.E. Ambassador Almir Šahović, of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the Chairperson of this meeting. I can assure you of my delegation's full and continued support.

Similarly, I wish to convey New Zealand's sincere appreciation for, and confidence in, Director-General Fernando Arias, Deputy Director Odette Melono and the Technical Secretariat. We also acknowledge the valuable contributions of industry experts, academia, and civil society in supporting and advancing our work here in the OPCW.

A core component of New Zealand's foreign policy is our unwavering opposition to the development, possession, and use of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons. Such weapons are indiscriminate and inhumane; we are resolute that they have no place in our world. We do not want to see a world where conflicts, whether that be in Palestine, Sudan, or elsewhere, become theatres for chemical weapons use. We trust the Secretariat to monitor all situations, and to intervene where required. As a State Party, we will do our part to always support the Secretariat – this is the most important work. We thank all States Parties that are working to ensure a future without chemical weapons.

Chair, I want to start by welcoming the positive steps taken this year in progressing toward this shared goal.

Chair, we encourage States Parties, from all regions, to share knowledge and expertise, and build collaborative working relationships with our respective chemical industries. The international cooperation and capability training exercises that have been held around the world, and the establishment of new regional designated laboratories will enable stronger, collective responses to the use or threat of use of chemical weapons. We also welcome the discussions this year on the impacts of emerging technology on our work. We should seize

the opportunities it affords this organisation, while ensuring that we are ready to respond to the sharpening challenges it creates.

Let me turn now to the work we can achieve collectively during this session, and beyond.

Chair, New Zealand wants to see meaningful progress across the mandate of the Organisation. We commend the *Roadmap on Workforce Gender Equality*. Ensuring gender balance within the Secretariat and developing a gender-responsive lens to our work, will make us more effective.

We want to see an organisation that reflects the diversity and strengths of the 193 States Parties that make up its membership. To this end, we welcomed the decision on avenues for improving geographical representation last CSP. We look forward to receiving updates on progress and to continued progress in the coming year.

Likewise, New Zealand welcomes initiatives to improve engagement with non-government organisations. Achieving transparency, clarity and consistency in the accreditation process is a vital step toward supporting broader civil society participation from around the world. As a State Party in region distant from OPCW's headquarters, we recognise its importance, and thank our German and Costa Rican colleagues for their diligent work to facilitate these consultations. We regret that consensus could not be met and will look to support further efforts on this issue.

It is imperative that the OPCW continue to have the resources it needs to fulfil its mandate. We welcome the adoption of the *Draft Programme and Budget for 2025*. We are grateful to the facilitators, and to the many States Parties who have worked constructively this year to support the organisation.

We believe that the OPCW functions well as a non-career organisation. However, there is a shared conviction amongst States Parties that the Director-General needs some additional flexibility in human resources policy, to allow limited scope for rehiring of former staff in exceptional cases. New Zealand and Mexico look forward to progressing this at the March Executive Council in 2025, and to welcoming broad support from States Parties.

However, this year was not only a year of progress, but also one of significant challenge from chemical weapon use. Nowhere is that felt more acutely than in the frontlines of Ukraine. New Zealand condemns, unequivocally, Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression in Ukraine. We note with alarm the increasing reports of Russia's use of Riot Control Agents as a weapon of war, and further reports of attacks using scheduled substances, including Chloropicrin. This year witnessed staggering numbers of allegations, with recent figures at over 4,600 – but these are not just figures we are talking about, it is harmful effects on people. We note with serious concern that the recent Technical Assistance Visit to Ukraine has reported evidence of the presence of Riot Control Agents. This is in line with reports of Russian actions that we have heard throughout the year, and that have been reported by Russia's own media. We commend the OPCW's independence and professionalism, working meticulously despite the security challenges faced in the

region. Russia also continues to wage a campaign of disinformation here in The Hague and afar; Russia has evaded responsible and credible engagement at every opportunity.

In line with our grave concern about this situation, New Zealand intends to soon announce further sanctions action in relation to the use of chemical weapons in Ukraine.

New Zealand remains deeply concerned that the Russian Federation has not yet responded to questions from 45 States Parties in October 2021 over the poisoning of Mr Alexei Navalny in 2020 with a nerve agent from the Novichok family. We once again urge Russia to cooperate in good faith.

Because of its aggression and its breaches of the UN Charter and the Chemical Weapons Convention, we cannot support the Russian Federation as a member of the Executive Council. We strongly support North Macedonia and the Czech Republic.

Chair, this year saw the number of outstanding issues on the initial Syria declaration rise again to 19. After 11 years of consultations, we are barely closer to answers. New Zealand continues to condemn the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic, the evidence of which is indisputable. We reiterate our call on Syria to meet its legal obligations under the Convention, to declare and destroy the entirety of its chemical weapons programme, and to cooperate fully with the Secretariat to resolve these outstanding issues.

In closing, let me leave you with a Te Reo Māori proverb: *He maurea kai whiria!*

This is a call, to remind us to ignore that which is insignificant, to keep our perspective and our focus on what truly matters, even in the face of great challenge.

We ask that this statement be made an official-series document and published on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you.