



**U.S. National Statement  
at the Twenty-Ninth Session of the OPCW Conference of the States Parties**

**Under Secretary of State Bonnie Jenkins  
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Mr. Chairperson,  
Mr. Director-General,  
Distinguished Ambassadors and Delegates,

It is a pleasure to return to the Conference of the States Parties to speak to you all on issues that unite us behind the goal of freeing the world of chemical weapons.

Before I begin my remarks, I want to acknowledge the crises that our world is facing today, which unfortunately have expanded since the last time I stood at this podium. I am specifically referring to the dangerous cycle of violence in the Middle East, as well as the dire humanitarian conditions we are witnessing in Gaza and Lebanon.

While my remarks today will focus on issues related to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, I must note the United States' deep concern about the grave implications of these conflicts on human lives. The scale of suffering is unacceptable, which is why the United States is working to achieve a ceasefire and hostage release in Gaza and a diplomatic solution in Lebanon. Over the last fiscal year, the United States announced nearly \$1.2 billion dollars in humanitarian assistance for Palestinians in need in Gaza, the West Bank, and neighboring countries and nearly \$423 million dollars to aid civilians in Lebanon and Syria displaced by the increase in conflict.

I want to underscore the importance of monitoring the situation in Gaza and elsewhere for any developments related to the Chemical Weapons Convention and thank Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat for their efforts.

I also want to recognize today is the international day for the elimination of violence against women.

Mr. Chairperson, the prohibition against the use of chemical weapons enshrined in the Convention protects us all. No matter which region or country we live in, we are all safer in a world without chemical weapons. The near universality of the Convention is a testament to our collective commitment to the tenets of the Convention.

Yet, the norm against using chemical weapons is not self-sustaining. It relies on us, as States Parties, to ensure that we uphold it for current and future generations and to ensure that we implement our obligations.

That is why I am proud to announce the United States' recent provision of \$2 million in voluntary funding to support critical OPCW missions. This funding will bolster the OPCW's ability to conduct the work of its Syria missions; provide training and equipment to support Ukraine to protect itself against the use of chemical weapons; support temporary working groups of the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) so that States Parties have access to objective, technical assessments on emerging issues; and hire Junior Professional Officers to improve geographical representation in the OPCW workforce. This funding adds to the \$3.1 million that the United States previously made available to the OPCW this year, to support its operations, and fund critical capacity building initiatives and efforts such as the ChemTech Center.

Distinguished delegates, we do this because the world needs a strong OPCW to address the challenges we face today. The Technical Secretariat continues as the preeminent technical organization carrying out its mandate, including by responding to assistance requests around the world, and the world is safer because of the dedication of the OPCW Technical

Secretariat and commitment of each and every person on its staff. I commend and thank you for your dedication.

We must uphold the norm against the use and production of CW. I remain appalled by the scale and frequency of Russia's use of chloropicrin, as well as riot control agents as a method of warfare, against Ukrainian forces. Russia's use of RCAs on the battlefield in its unlawful war against Ukraine has been no secret. It has been well documented by not only Ukraine, but also by credible NGOs, journalists, and even Russian troops and state media. But for those who had any doubts, the Technical Secretariat has also confirmed the presence of riot control agents in samples collected in Ukraine.

Specifically, the Technical Secretariat report last week indicated the presence of CS tear gas in samples collected from the front lines of Ukraine, based on analysis by two OPCW designated laboratories. The United States commends the efforts the OPCW undertook to carry out this work, in accordance with the highest standards of transparency and professionalism.

The Secretariat's thorough analysis involved Technical Assistance Visit experts collecting documentation and digital files as well as testimonies from first-hand witnesses and receiving samples that included the shell of a grenade. A shell bearing markings from a Russian munitions manufacturer. Russia had once lied when it said it had no intention of invading Ukraine. Russia lied when it said it was not using riot control agents in violation of the Convention. We know that both of these statements are not true.

Russia's violations directly undermine the Convention that we are all here to protect and uphold. Despite the overwhelming publicly available evidence, the Kremlin continues to hide behind patently absurd denials, just as it denied its operatives being responsible for using Novichok nerve agents in assassination attempts against the Skripals in 2018 and Aleksey Navalny in 2020. The Kremlin's contempt for the OPCW, fabrication of evidence, and constant lying in this institution are indefensible behaviors for a State Party to the Convention. It is a tragic fall from the Russian

Federation I knew three decades ago that played a critical role in drafting the Convention.

Given Russia's shameless actions, it is no surprise that the vast majority of countries in the Eastern Europe Group do not want Moscow to hold one of their seats on the Executive Council when it is engaged in a war of aggression against a member of the group, and one in which it has repeatedly violated the Convention. We hope countries will respect and support the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the Eastern Europe Group and what they themselves prefer by supporting Czechia and North Macedonia's candidacies. Indeed, we all saw how Russia used its seat on the Executive Council to obstruct the work of the OPCW and to spread disinformation in response to States Parties' questions about its violations of the Convention. In contrast, Czechia and North Macedonia are strong supporters of the CWC and the OPCW, and we are confident that they will serve as responsible members of the Council and work effectively to advance the organization's mission.

Our work requires patience and resilience. No matter the passage of time, the United States plans to work together with States Parties to achieve a world where all States Parties – including countries such as Russia, Iran, and Syria – are in compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

More than a decade has passed since the world was shocked by the first large-scale chemical attack in Syria. Still, the Assad regime has yet to comply with its obligations under the Convention and fully and verifiably declare and destroy its chemical weapons program.

This is not a political statement. This is a statement of fact. The Syrian regime has done everything it can to hide and deny the facts. The regime falsely claimed to have destroyed its entire chemical weapons stockpile, then it falsely claimed to have never possessed chemicals that the UN and OPCW subsequently found. And to this very day, the regime falsely claims it never used chemical weapons – even though this has been proven by repeated independent investigations, supported by the testimony of numerous victims and witnesses. The Assad regime's mendacity knows no bounds.

The OPCW Declaration Assessment Team's latest findings in May 2024 are a stark reminder that the Syrian chemical weapons threat is tragically not a relic of the past. Syria's initial declaration was not complete in 2013, and it is not complete now. Until it is, we will continue to raise this issue, because Syria should be held to the same standards of compliance with the Convention as the rest of us.

Last year, this Conference adopted the forward-looking decision on "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use and the Threat of Future Use." In doing so, we as States Parties sent a clear message that it is our collective responsibility to prevent state and non-state actors from diverting dual-use chemicals and equipment to the production of chemical weapons. Taking such steps enhances global security.

The United States is committed to continue to work closely with fellow States Parties and the Technical Secretariat to implement the decision's recommended collective measures.

I look forward to the day when this Conference no longer has to repeat the call for Syria to fully declare, once and for all, its chemical weapons-related activities in accordance with its obligations.

If Syria continues to fail to come into full compliance with the Convention, other violators will take note.

Look no further than Iran. The United States condemns Iran's dangerous pursuit of pharmaceutical based agents for offensive purposes, in addition to its failure to declare its transfer of chemical weapons to Libya predating the Convention, its failure to declare its complete holdings of riot control agents, and its failure to submit a complete chemical weapons production facilities declaration.

The United States also further urges Myanmar to come into full compliance, noting that it has failed to declare its past chemical weapons program and destroy its historical chemical weapons production facility.

We also note compliance concerns about the People's Republic of China's research of pharmaceutical-based agents and toxins with potential dual-use applications.

We urge all countries to comply with their obligations under the Convention.

I'd like to conclude with some reflections for the future.

We have much to do, but also much to be optimistic about.

During my time as Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, I have reviewed the security implications of emerging technology, but what I remain intrigued by is how we may be able to lean into emerging technology, especially AI, as a tool to help us strengthen our efforts to implement the Convention. I appreciate the OPCW Technical Secretariat for exploring this premise, rather than shy away from a technology that we cannot deny.

The United States commends the recent conference co-hosted by the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Kingdom of Morocco, which aimed at holistically examining the implications of AI technology. This discussion on the role of emerging technologies on the implementation of the Convention helped us get started on an important conversation we must continue – not only related to our concerns regarding these technologies, but also their peaceful uses that may benefit our work here.

The work of the OPCW's Scientific Advisory Board and last year's opening of the ChemTech Centre are a credit to the technical expertise that exists within the OPCW's Technical Secretariat. We all benefit from it, and so I want to take a moment to acknowledge it.

At a time of so many crises in our world, the mere existence of a dedicated body with significant technical capabilities that we can all turn to in order to enhance implementation of the Convention and address concerns about compliance is a resource that we should never take for granted.

I want to leave this Conference with a reminder. The OPCW's existence is not only vital to our ability to implement this Convention effectively and verifiably, but also to the security of each and every State Party to the Convention.

I remember being a part of the CWC negotiations moving the treaty through the advice and consent of the US Senate and attending the first meeting of the Preparatory Commission held in 1993 held in Scheveningen in the Netherlands before the OPCW building was erected. I now have witnessed the destruction of all declared CW as mandated by the CWC. Now we must continue to keep the convention strong for all States Parties to understand the value of the convention and what it does to maintain the norm against CW production and use. We MUST remember the vision and the reason why we decided to negotiate the CWC. Those reasons are no less important now than they were in the when the CWC was negotiated in 1993.

The OPCW unites us all towards a common goal: freeing the world of chemical weapons. The United States will continue to work with States Parties to stay united behind this common goal, to work together no matter the crises at hand, and to keep all of our citizens - regardless of nationality, race, or religion - safe and secure not only by serving as engaged and active States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, but also as guardians and protectors of the obligations it enshrines to live in a world free of chemical weapons.

Thank you.