



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF AUSTRALIA, CANADA AND NEW ZEALAND (CANZ) AT THE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM 13: FOLLOW-UP TO THE REVIEW CONFERENCES

Chair,

Thank you for giving me the floor. I have the honour of addressing the Council today on behalf of Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

Chair, CANZ would like to begin by thanking the co-facilitators for the informal consultations on civil society engagement, Costa Rica and Germany, for their tireless effort and leadership on this important issue.

Chair, the enriched dialogue and positive outcomes realized through civil society engagement with the OPCW are very clear. We consider that contributions from across the broad spectrum of civil society help enable the full and effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Canada, Australia and New Zealand support active participation in the OPCW from a broad and inclusive range of voices, including women and youth. The full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women in global disarmament fora, including the OPCW, is essential to fostering international peace and security. We recognize the expertise, the accountability, and the unique perspective that civil society brings to the table to advance our shared objective of a world permanently free of chemical weapons.

As a vibrant and engaged civil society is fundamental to democracy, so too is it essential to realizing the object and purpose of the Chemical Weapons Convention. States Parties alone do not have a monopoly on efforts to rid the world of chemical weapons and the threat of their use. The OPCW is not an island, and we need to work together to ensure it never becomes one. We need a diversity of viewpoints and disarmament champions from across civil society, including academics, scientists, NGOs and industry experts, to broaden awareness of and support for the OPCW's work, and to reinforce the global norm against chemical weapons use. Let there be no mistake, past and ongoing actions by certain states and non-state actors risk rolling back the consolidation of this international norm.

Chair, CANZ supports ongoing efforts to strengthen synergies with civil society through new and existing modes of engagement with the OPCW, including through further intersessional events and initiatives. The diverse perspectives of civil society enrich our thinking, while generating new approaches and positive change. We do not require, as some states have requested of the Technical Secretariat, a comprehensive survey of civil society contributions to know that a diverse and inclusive environment fosters innovation, creativity and resilience – all of which are essential to improving the outcomes of our collective work in advancing the mandate of the OPCW.

To that end, we continue to believe that we need a more streamlined and transparent NGO accreditation process which does not alter the basic guidelines as established by the Conference of States Parties. As with any guidelines, however, there is room for improvement by learning from experiences of their implementation, learning shared by States Parties, civil society organisations, and the Technical Secretariat. While the oral report delivered today presents a sensible way forward, we regret that it has not been possible to reach consensus to date on pragmatic proposals that are based on best practices aimed at making the accreditation guidelines more efficient, consistent and transparent. In particular, CANZ would fully support a recommendation that States Parties wishing to object to the participation and attendance of a particular NGO at the Conference do so in writing, with reasons communicated to other states, to the Secretariat and, through it, to the NGO in question. Doing so is not a question of legal obligation, but rather one of procedural fairness and due process that benefits the OPCW and its Member States alike, and serves to uphold the integrity of the Convention.

Thank you, Chair.

I kindly ask you to consider this CANZ statement as an official document of the 107th Session of the Executive Council, and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

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