



## **STATEMENT OF CANADA TO THE 107<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE OPCW EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

### **AGENDA ITEM 5: GENERAL DEBATE**

#### **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)**

Excellencies and distinguished colleagues,

Today we will speak to matters fundamental to this Convention – questions we have regarding Syria and Russia’s compliance with the Convention; as well as matters of operational importance – work in the Industry Cluster and the Organisation’s efforts on gender issues; and matters of business – the mid-term adjustments to the biennial budget.

Chair,

In last week’s briefing by the Technical Secretariat, we were told that for the majority of the 19 outstanding issues regarding Syria’s Initial Declaration, they were “of serious concern”. We agree with this assessment. Until these outstanding issues are fully resolved, we can only conclude that the Assad regime maintained an offensive chemical weapons capability, and that it used this for the nine post-destruction chemical attacks that the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism and OPCW Investigation and Identification Team have attributed to the armed forces of the Syrian Arab Republic.

As work in Syria continues, Chair, we are pleased that Canada was able to provide Can\$1 million to support the OPCW Syria Missions and a further Can\$390,000 to support profiling of chemical samples.

Chair, we again condemn Russia’s illegal and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine. We are concerned by reports that Russian armed forces have used riot control agents as a weapon of war, and have also used more toxic chemicals as weapons. Any such activities would be violations of Article I of the Convention.

We have joined other States Parties to ask answers from the Russian Federation on the strong evidence that it uses riot control agents on the battlefield in Ukraine. Unfortunately, our questions have been rebuffed. Further efforts to draw the truth from the Russian government have been met with disinformation, which jeopardizes global security and represents a direct threat to the object and purpose of the Convention. To address WMD disinformation, Canada is pleased to support a project led by Johns Hopkins University.



We note with regret that Russia still has not answered questions posed four years ago by 45 States Parties regarding the poisoning of Alexei Navalny with a Novichok agent. We again call on Russia to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat, investigate, and report honestly on the circumstances surrounding this use of a chemical weapon on its own territory.

The OPCW sent Technical Assistance Visits to Ukraine in July and September to provide CBRN prevention, detection, and response equipment and associated training. Canada has contributed Can\$750,000 to the Article X Ukraine Assistance Fund, and we are proud to see that this support is being put to good use.

Chair, Canada is pleased to have seen progress on a variety of issues in the Industry Cluster. We know that the Convention's verification system imposes a burden on national chemical industries. We recognize that these burdens contribute to our security and our confidence in each State Party's compliance with the Convention. We are open to reducing that burden as long as we maintain the strength of our verification regime.

Chair, we recall the statement delivered at the last Executive Council session by the distinguished Ambassador of Mexico on behalf of 59 countries, Canada included, on gender perspectives and the OPCW. The Women, Peace, and Security agenda helps advance the work of the OPCW, which has made excellent steps in improving the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women in its work. We repeat our previous invitation for the Technical Secretariat to continue engaging with States Parties on the issue of gender, and welcome the presentation on these issues made by APB in the informal consultations on Article X implementation held last month.

Finally, Chair, it is the time of year for us 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 look forward to the adoption of this adjustment at the Conference of States Parties next month.

Chair, I ask that the full version of this statement be made an official-series document of the 107<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Council and published on Catalyst and the public website of the OPCW.

Thank you.