



UK Delegation to the OPCW

***Statement to the 107th Session of the Executive Council
of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical
Weapons***

***by Her Excellency Joanna Roper, Permanent
Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland***

Mr Chair, Director General, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to begin by thanking you, Ambassador Terán Parral for your continuing strong leadership of this Executive Council and reiterate our full support. I would also like to express my thanks to His Excellency, Director General Fernando Arias, for his comprehensive report detailing this organisation's continuing determined efforts to rid the world of chemical weapons. The achievements are even more remarkable considering the growing challenges presented by a difficult international security environment.

Mr Chair,

Russia used the lethal nerve agent, Novichok, on the streets of the UK in 2018, ultimately leading to the death of Dawn Sturgess. Russia used Novichok again to poison Alexei Navalny in 2020. And now we are witness to Russian breaches of the Chemical Weapons Convention on the frontlines in Ukraine. Russia is making systematic use of chemical weapons against Ukrainian forces, including multiple reports of the use of the choking agent chloropicrin, with complete contempt for its legal and moral obligations to uphold the CWC.

The UK will hold all those who use these barbaric weapons to account. Today, my government has therefore announced sanctions on Russia's Radiological, Chemical and Biological Defence Troops, their commander Igor Kirillov and two of their subordinate laboratories, for their role in Russia's use of chemical weapons in Ukraine.

We call on Russia to immediately cease its use of these appalling weapons and to meet its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy has sent a clear message to President Putin – and I quote - that “Russia's cruel and inhumane tactics on the battlefield are abhorrent and I will use the full arsenal of powers at my disposal to combat Russia's malign activity.”

Alongside these sanctions, we remain committed to working through this Council and other international forums to reduce the growing threat to international security posed by Russia's chemical weapon use. We reiterate our request to the Executive Council under Article IX paragraph 3 to assist in clarifying reports that Russian armed forces have repeatedly breached the Chemical Weapon Convention in Ukraine.

The UK is committed to supporting Ukraine's fight for freedom, liberty and victory in the face of these inhumane attacks. The UK has now committed £12.8 billion in military, humanitarian and economic support to Ukraine. As part of this package of support, we have recently announced a further voluntary contribution to the OPCW's Assistance to Ukraine trust fund. The UK welcomes the recent OPCW technical assistance visit to Ukraine – delivering vital equipment and training to ensure Ukraine can protect its people.

Mr Chair,

The Assad Regime continues to pose a threat to regional and international security. The Syrian Regime failed to declare and destroy all its chemical weapon stockpile after acceding to the CWC in 2013. This is demonstrated unequivocally by at least nine sarin and chlorine attacks conducted by Assad's regime in the past 10 years. The DAT identified further serious issues with Syria's declaration earlier this year, indicating additional undeclared chemical weapon processing and weaponisation. The threat of this undeclared programme to the Syrian people and Middle Eastern security, in the context of increasing regional instability, is growing. Undeclared and unaccounted for chemical weapons could proliferate to non-state actors - it is a risk that crosses national borders.

This enduring threat is why it is so important that we implement last November's CSP decision, 'Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use and The Threat of Future Use' in full. This must include greater scrutiny of toxic chemical transfers to Syria and

annual reporting by the Technical Secretariat on the implementation of this decision. The UK is also pleased to have joined a diverse group of states from Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe to consider options to pursue criminal accountability for chemical weapon use. We reiterate our full support to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) for Syria, and the dedicated work of the OPCW's Fact Finding Mission and Investigation and Identification Team. We must ensure justice for those affected by these appalling attacks.

Mr Chair,

The UK welcomes the addition of emerging technology to the agenda of the Executive Council and thanks the Director General for his leadership on this critical topic. New and emerging technologies are revolutionising our world, with far-reaching opportunities and risks for the Chemical Weapons Convention. We look forward to the important conference on AI later this month and thank the Kingdom of Morocco for hosting.

Mr Chair,

We would like to thank the Technical Secretariat and the Polish and Mexican delegations for conducting a thorough and transparent budget revision consultation process. The budget revision is in line with the Decision supported by an overwhelming majority of States Parties at last November's Conference of States Parties and will support critical physical and cyber security enhancement. We, therefore, encourage all States Parties to support the Draft Revised Programme and Budget.

The UK reiterates its commitment to promoting diversity in all its forms. We applaud efforts to increase gender equality and geographical representation. We look forward to further insight into Technical Secretariat and States Parties efforts to deliver our shared objectives.

I would like to thank the Director General and the OPCW Technical Secretariat for their delivery of a comprehensive and effective International Cooperation and Assistance programme this year. We also recognise the many States Parties that directly contribute to its important outputs. International Cooperation and Assistance is critical to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and will remain a UK priority.

The OPCW remains one of the foremost arms control bodies, fundamental to international security. Yet, the challenges it faces are growing. The UK is fully committed to working with other states and the Technical Secretariat to meet these challenges to achieve a world free of chemical weapons.