

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR NICOLE SHAMPAINÉ

**PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE
OPCW AT THE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE
COUNCIL**

Mr. Chairperson,
Director General,
Distinguished Ambassadors and Delegates,

Recently, several of us participated in a visit to Chinese sites at which Japan and China are working together to locate, excavate, and destroy abandoned chemical weapons. This visit was an opportunity to witness firsthand the magnitude of the issue and the cooperation between Japan and China in tackling this challenge. I would like to express my deep appreciation to the governments of China and Japan for making this visit possible.

The theme of the visit was “A World Free of Chemical Weapons.” And that is indeed the goal of the Convention: to create “A World Free of Chemical Weapons.”

As we work to achieve this goal, we focus on ensuring **universality** of the Convention. We focus on ensuring countries have the **capacity to implement** the Convention – and in this regard, the United States backs up its words with deeds, including \$140 million in capacity-building programs for countries all around the world in the past two years alone, as well as our funding of JPO positions for other countries to increase geographic representation at the OPCW. We focus on **destroying declared and abandoned chemical weapons**. And we focus on **preventing the reemergence and use of chemical weapons**.

These are the four pillars on which the Convention stands. Each is critical. And my government looks forward to working with States Parties from all regions as we strengthen these pillars together. And we support achieving consensus wherever possible, as we demonstrated through our years' long efforts do so on ABAF.

Achieving our collective goal requires the complete destruction of the global chemical weapons stockpile. Last year we celebrated the destruction of States Parties' declared chemical weapons. And while this also means destroying abandoned chemical weapons, as Japan and China are working

together to achieve right now, to achieve “A World Free of Chemical Weapons” we must prevent the reemergence of chemical weapons.

Tragically, this goal remains elusive because we have seen the use of chemical weapons.

We have seen this in the Middle East, with Syria having repeatedly used chemical weapons and retaining a chemical weapons program. The United States assesses that Iran also maintains a chemical weapons program that involves the development and filling of munitions with pharmaceutical-based agents. In addition, we have witnessed ISIS using chemical weapons in the region.

And we have seen this in Europe, with Russia’s assassination attempts using Novichok nerve agents against the Skripals and Alexei Navalny. And Russia is now using riot control agents as a method of warfare and the Schedule 3 chemical chloropicrin, on the battlefield in Ukraine.

If State Parties are not held to account when they violate the fundamental obligation not to use chemical weapons, no region will be safe.

I had the opportunity to speak recently with one of the negotiators involved in drafting the Convention. He recounted how numerous countries from across the globe had been involved in drafting the treaty, with a core group of around 25 countries that were especially active, including the United States, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and South Africa.

It is therefore a tragedy to see Russia go from being centrally involved in negotiating and adopting one of the most successful arms control agreements in history to becoming a violator of the Convention.

No amount of Russian disinformation and propaganda will change this reality. Just as it did not change the reality of Syria's having used chemical weapons when Russia engaged in similar disinformation to try to cover up those atrocities.

As I mentioned at the last EC, the United States and others are rushing to deliver thousands of protective masks to Ukrainian soldiers. One hundred years after World War I, we have regressed to having soldiers don masks on the battlefield to protect themselves from chemical munitions. What used to be done with artillery and bombs, Russia is delivering with a variety of devices, including UAVs.

We should all be alarmed. Whether you live in Africa, the Americas, Asia, or Europe, the norm against using chemical weapons protects us all. This is not a political issue. This cuts at the core of the Convention we are here to uphold.

For the sake of current and future generations, no matter which part of the world we live in, we must do everything we can to deter Russia from continuing along this escalatory path. A Russia with a chemical weapons program is a direct challenge to the norms established by the Convention. It is utterly incompatible with achieving "A World Free of Chemical Weapons." I look forward to discussions during the coming days as we consider how we can make "A World Free of Chemical Weapons" more than words and make it a reality.

Thank you.