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IRELAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR KEVIN KELLY
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRELAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

Ireland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I will add the following remarks in a national capacity.

To begin, I would like to thank Director-General Fernando Arias, and the Technical Secretariat for their continued commitment to furthering the work of the OPCW and to ensuring the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) as we continue to face the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I also wish to thank you for guiding the preparatory work for this Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council, which once again meets under the shadow of the ongoing public health crisis. Though it may have changed the format of our work, our goal of a world free of chemical weapons remains unchanged.

Ireland condemns any and all uses of chemical weapons and seeks accountability for those who use them. Any use of chemical weapons is a breach of international law. It is completely unacceptable and demands accountability.

Regrettably, little has changed since our last session. We remain deeply concerned about the impunity with which perpetrators have carried out chemical weapons attacks in recent years. Despite multiple reports from the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) which has identified perpetrators of chemical weapons use in the Syrian Arab Republic, justice still eludes the victims. Impunity deprives victims of justice, emboldens perpetrators, and undermines the Convention itself. As States Parties to the Convention, it is incumbent upon each of us to dedicate ourselves to upholding the Convention and the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons.

Ireland is fully committed to supporting efforts designed to uphold and strengthen the Convention and to end impunity for such grave violations of international law. As an elected member of the United Nations Security Council, we will continue efforts to maintain a clear focus on chemical weapons and fight against impunity for those who fail to respect their obligations and commitments under the Convention.



This is a crucial juncture, one in which the international community must unequivocally reject any attempt to undermine the clear and absolute norm established by the Convention. Ireland remains fully committed to the international rules-based order, to the fight against impunity, and to the pursuit of justice, which we believe are essential components of sustainable peace, security and reconciliation.

Ireland reiterates our condemnation of the poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, which constitutes a serious breach of international law and international human rights standards. The confirmation by multiple independent laboratories that a nerve agent from the novichok group was used to poison Mr Navalny is deeply worrying. We are disappointed that the Russian Federation appears to have withdrawn its request for the technical assistance visit from the OPCW Technical Secretariat and we would encourage a re-engagement with the OPCW to ensure those responsible can be held to account.

Ireland supports the recent decision of the European Union to impose restrictive measures against a number of Russian individuals for inducing and providing support in the poisoning of Alexei Navalny.

We have seen little progress in relation to outstanding discrepancies in the Syrian Arab Republic's 2013 Declaration to the OPCW, which we still cannot consider complete or accurate. Gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies remain unresolved almost eight years after the initial declaration was submitted. Furthermore, the adoption by this Executive Council of the July 2020 decision—based on the findings of the first report of the IIT, which attributed responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in Ltamenah, the Syrian Arab Republic in 2017 to the Syrian Arab Air Force—called on the Syrian Arab Republic to take a number of actions to address the report's findings.

The Syrian Arab Republic has failed to address any of the concerns raised. Its failure to cooperate fully with the Technical Secretariat's ongoing investigations is disconcerting. This is echoed in the most recent reports of the Director-General, which underscore the lack of progress on the outstanding Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons file. Let us be clear, the Syrian Arab Republic must act immediately to meet its legal obligations under the Convention, the July Executive Council decision and the United Nations Security Council resolution 2118. The Syrian Arab Republic must cooperate actively, openly and in good faith with the OPCW.

Ireland stands ready to support the utilisation of all measures available under the Convention to ensure compliance. To that end, we have co-sponsored the draft decision "Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic". Ireland urges all States Parties to support the decision's adoption. Ireland reiterates its support for the European Union's restrictive measures on high-level Syrian Arab Republic officials and entities involved in the development and use of chemical weapons.

To prevent chemical weapons use, we must have full compliance with the Convention. The OPCW is crucial in this regard. Its expertise, professionalism and impartiality while addressing the use of chemical weapons offer a vital first step towards accountability and an end to impunity. We must protect the integrity of the Convention, a key instrument of the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime, and to uphold the global chemical weapons non-use norm. Any attempt to undermine or discredit the independent work of the OPCW represents a threat to the very bedrock of the Convention.

Ireland maintains the utmost respect and confidence in the work of the Organisation and the Technical Secretariat. To this end, we hope to be in a position to announce a financial contribution to its ongoing work in the Syrian Arab Republic soon.

In the past year, we have faced unprecedented challenges due to COVID-19. Though this forum has been able to sustain its vital work, it has highlighted the need for enhanced contingency measures should we face such an emergency again. We believe that our shared experience in these trying times has demonstrated the need for enhanced OPCW contingency preparedness, and we are pleased to have supported and contributed to the work of Germany in the preparation of a non-paper on convening Executive Council meetings in emergency circumstances, and we look forward to continuing these efforts in the coming months.

Ireland is pleased to co-sponsor the draft decision on central nervous system-acting chemicals (CNS-acting chemicals) submitted to the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council by Australia, Switzerland and the United States of America. Ireland attaches a high priority to this draft decision and has long supported Swiss and Australian joint efforts on this topic in the work of the Convention. In deciding to co-sponsor this decision, we are mindful of the importance of ensuring widespread cross-regional support among States Parties for the initiative. We look forward to supporting the efforts of the main sponsors of this decision in this endeavour.

Ireland believed that any nomination of the External Auditor of the OPCW should be based on technical merit and assessment of the nominations, as is the established practice, consistent with the factors outlined in the Note circulated in 2020 (Note S/1824/2020). This appointment should be made as soon as is feasible to avoid lapses in financial oversight and to facilitate continuity in the Organisation.

Ireland will continue to work with all partners and through the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons to uphold the core values of our Convention. We commend the work of the OPCW and recognise the professionalism, expertise, and tireless commitment of the Director-General, and the Organisation. We call on all States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to honour their commitments and obligations faithfully.

I would kindly ask that this statement be issued as an official document and placed on the OPCW's public website.

Thank you.

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