



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

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ENGLISH and FRENCH only

**CANADA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LISA HELFAND  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA TO THE OPCW  
AT THE NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,  
Mr Director-General,  
Excellencies and colleagues,

Canada has three areas of concern to which it would like to draw the attention of the Executive Council (“the Council”) during its Ninety-Sixth Session.

Firstly, Canada is deeply concerned that the use of a novichok nerve agent in the Russian Federation in August 2020 remains unaddressed. We regret the Russian Federation’s decision to cancel its request for an OPCW technical assistance visit in December 2020, and note with disappointment the uncooperative nature of the Russian Federation’s engagement with the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) on this matter. The Russian Federation must comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) and investigate the use of a chemical weapon on its territory.

Secondly, Canada condemns the Syrian Arab Republic’s use and continued possession of chemical weapons more than seven years after committing to their destruction. We note with great concern the Declaration Assessment Team’s report of November 2020 pointing to an undeclared chemical weapons production facility. The Syrian Arab Republic continues to obstruct the work of the Declaration Assessment Team.

The only plausible explanation is that the Syrian Arab Republic is hiding the full extent of its chemical weapons stockpiles and capabilities from the OPCW, in violation of its international legal obligations.

There must be consequences for such violations of the basic tenets of the Convention. To this end, Canada supports the draft decision entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic”. We urge States Parties to support the draft decision when the Conference of the States Parties resumes.

We will continue to support action in all possible international forums to hold the Syrian regime accountable for its war crimes.

Thirdly, Canada remains concerned by the potential use of central nervous system-acting chemicals in aerosolised form for law enforcement purposes, a purpose for which such



chemicals are entirely inappropriate, as concluded by the Scientific Advisory Board. We are pleased to co-sponsor the draft decision on this matter, and hope that the Council can adopt it without delay.

We are pleased to see the funding gap for the Centre for Chemistry and Technology shrinking considerably, in part as a result of the challenge issued by Canada in the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. Canada's contribution of CAD 10 million (EUR 6.5 million) to this project proves how valuable we believe this new Centre will be to the Organisation and its Member States. We urge States Parties to pledge the remaining funds.

Two weeks ago, the Secretariat presented its plan for industry inspections in 2021. Understanding the difficulties in verifying activities not prohibited by the Convention during a time when international travel is heavily restricted, the plan proposed by the Secretariat is logical and straightforward. In particular, Canada has always been supportive of conducting sequential inspections to keep costs down for both the National Authority and the Secretariat. We look forward to one day soon welcoming inspectors back to Canada.

As we continue to face the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretariat has demonstrated resilience in the face of unprecedented disruptions to its work. We recognise the Secretariat's professionalism and diligent efforts in adapting to new circumstances. Canada urges the Secretariat to continue being creative and vigilant, and supports efforts led by Germany to introduce appropriate procedures to convene meetings of the Council in force majeure circumstances.

I would ask that the full version of this statement be made an official-series document of the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Council and published on the external server and public website of the OPCW.

Thank you.

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