



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

Ninety-Seventh Session  
6 – 8 July 2021

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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-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,  
Mr Director-General,  
Excellencies,  
Dear Colleagues,

Distinguished Chairperson, Canada congratulates you on your new role as Chairperson of the Executive Council (“the Council”), and assures you of our full support and cooperation.

On 12 April 2021, the OPCW’s Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) released its second report. It reached the conclusion that there are reasonable grounds to believe that on 4 February 2018, a military helicopter of the Syrian Arab Air Force hit eastern Saraqib by dropping at least one cylinder, which ruptured and released chlorine, affecting 12 named individuals. We acknowledge the IIT’s independent, impartial, and professional work.

Canada strongly condemns the Syrian regime’s use and continued possession of chemical weapons. We also note with great concern the Syrian Arab Republic’s failure to respond to the most recent request for consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team. Twenty issues of substance in regard to chemical agents still remain to be resolved in the Syrian declaration. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to accept the decision of the Conference of the States Parties (“the Conference”) to revoke its rights and privileges, and demand that it make efforts to regain them by completing all of the necessary measures for reinstatement. This includes submitting a complete and accurate declaration.

Canada remains deeply concerned that the use of a novichok nerve agent in the Russian Federation in August 2020 remains uninvestigated almost a year later. We are disappointed with the uncooperative nature of the Russian Federation’s engagement with the Technical Secretariat on standard protocols for the deployment of a technical assistance visit. We urge the Russian Federation to respect its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”), and to investigate the use of a chemical weapon on its territory.

Canada co-sponsored and supported the decision entitled “Understanding Regarding the Aerosolised Use of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes”, adopted by the Council at its Ninety-Sixth Session. We hope that this important issue, founded in the science presented by the Scientific Advisory Board, will benefit from the support of all States Parties at the next session of the Conference in November 2021.



Canada fully supports work to define a process for the appointment of External Auditors to the OPCW. We hope that this process will be grounded on the basis of technical merit, and can be adopted by consensus.

The ongoing challenges posed by COVID-19 have underscored the need for this Organisation to be nimble. Canada welcomes, and is committed to support efforts led by Germany to ensure business continuity in force majeure circumstances. We hope the Council can adopt a proposal in this regard at its Ninety-Eighth Session.

Following extensive consultations, we are also encouraged to see a revised text on governance issues, by Australia and Uruguay. In due course, Canada is hopeful for a consensual decision on this important matter as well.

We are pleased to see the OPCWs' continued commitment to gender equality and greater diversity. We reaffirm our continued support for such efforts, and were pleased to see strong participation in the just-concluded OPCW Symposium on Women in Chemistry on 1 July 2021.

Canada remains deeply committed to supporting and resourcing the OPCW. In the past decade we have provided more than 40 million dollars in voluntary contributions to support the OPCW's critical work. Together with other members of the G7-led Global Partnership, we are currently exploring the potential for additional support to strengthen the OPCW and uphold the Convention.

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

Thank you.

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