



OPCW

Executive Council

Ninety-Eighth Session

5 – 7 October 2021

EC-98/NAT.22

5 October 2021

ENGLISH and FRENCH only

CANADA

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

Esteemed Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Madam Deputy Director-General,
Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,

As we see some improvements in our global situation in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, many challenges remain and should be recognised as the backdrop for our work at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). There are, however, clear issues that require firm action by the States Parties in the months to come.

Foremost among these issues are the budget, the lack of investigation of the novichok nerve agent attack on Alexei Navalny, and Syria's attempts to frustrate the work of the Technical Secretariat ("the Secretariat") with delays and stonewalling.

The OPCW's first biennial draft budget proposes an increase in assessed contributions in order that the Organisation can move towards a zero real growth budget. A zero real growth budget would take into account the pressures of inflation on the Organisation's finances. Canada supports this movement towards a more accurate financial picture.

Over the last decade, zero nominal growth (ZNG) budgeting for the OPCW has painted an unrealistic picture of the Organisation's finances and resulted in an unsustainable and precarious financial situation. ZNG-based budgeting has had a negative impact on the Organisation's core operational capacity. We encourage the Secretariat to continue building a strong and sustainable financial foundation to carry the OPCW into the post-destruction era.

The OPCW's financial difficulties are undeniably exacerbated by the non-payment, late payment, or incomplete payment of assessed contributions. Canada urges all States Parties to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time.

Canada remains deeply concerned there has been no attempt to investigate the August 2020 attack on Russian citizen Alexei Navalny with a novichok nerve agent. Serious doubts remain about this attack and the Russian Federation's compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention"). Canada supports calls to clarify and resolve this matter.



Canada also continues to be troubled by the Syrian regime's lack of responsiveness to the Secretariat's requests for visas to deploy its mandated missions, and by Syria's disregard for the decisions of the Executive Council ("the Council") and the Conference of the States Parties ("the Conference"). Syria is forcing the OPCW into a labyrinth of challenges that makes it nearly impossible for teams to deploy. This deliberate obstruction of the Secretariat's work is noncompliant with Syria's obligations to completely and verifiably disarm its chemical weapons programme. We urge Syria to immediately stop this obstructive behaviour and work toward its commitment to the object and purpose of the Convention.

Canada is pleased to put its support behind incumbent Director-General H.E. Fernando Arias. We are confident that the Director-General's steady leadership will help the Organisation navigate the choppy seas of the next four years, and continue to position the OPCW as a relevant and strong institution in the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture.

Canada welcomes efforts led by Germany to ensure business continuity in force majeure circumstances. We are pleased to co-sponsor Germany's proposal and hope that the Council can adopt a proposal by consensus in this regard.

Following continued engagement with the States Parties, we are encouraged by Australia and Uruguay's efforts to raise the important tenure issue with the Council. We encourage the Council to give this issue due regard, and hope that a consensus decision on this important matter will be possible in due course.

Finally, Canada hopes that the tendency of States Parties will be to maximise the presence of civil society partners at the upcoming Conference. Non-governmental organisations have a valuable perspective to add to our understanding of the challenges we face.

Thank you.

- - - 0 - - -