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CANADA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LISA HELFAND
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA TO THE OPCW
AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

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

Canada welcomes the election of H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway as Chairperson of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. We assure you, Mr Chairperson, of Canada's full confidence and cooperation.

We also recognise the stalwart leadership of Director-General Fernando Arias in leading the OPCW over the past year and a half through a global pandemic that has challenged us all. This is in keeping with his committed leadership in facing the challenges of the past three years. Canada believes he has the vision and competence needed to keep the Organisation on course beyond the Fifth Review Conference and into the future. Canada supports the decision to reappoint Director-General Arias to a second four-year mandate.

A number of other important issues face us this week, including decisions on aerosolised central nervous system-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes, and on the OPCW programme and budget.

Canada remains concerned by the potential for States to use aerosolised central nervous system-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes. We agree with the conclusion of the Scientific Advisory Board, according to which this category of chemicals is not appropriate for use in law enforcement. In March 2021, the Executive Council took a decision on a common understanding that the use of aerosolised central nervous system-acting chemicals is inconsistent with law enforcement as a purpose not prohibited by the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention"). This decision adds no further burden to the States Parties. It simply clarifies that the use of this type of chemicals by law enforcement is not consistent with the intent of the Convention. We look forward to the adoption of the decision on this common understanding by the Conference.



We also fully support the draft decision on the OPCW Programme and Budget for 2022. We understand the challenges for States Parties imposed by a zero real growth approach, particularly in these times of economic strain as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, after years of zero nominal growth budgets, this modification is urgently needed in order for the Organisation to be on a sustainable footing and to fulfil its mandate effectively.

We also share the concerns about the financial challenges caused by the late or non-payment of assessed contributions, including by a small number of States Parties who have chosen to withhold part of their dues for political reasons. This does harm to all the programmes of the OPCW. We urge all States Parties to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time.

Beyond these decisions, there are a number of issues that touch on the core obligations of the Convention that are of concern to Canada and deserve our consideration this week.

It has now been more than a year since the August 2020 attempted assassination of Alexei Navalny with a novichok-type chemical weapon. Since then, no progress has been made. No investigation has taken place in Russia. Questions put to the Russian Federation under Article IX in October 2021 by 45 countries (including Canada) remain unanswered. The only reaction has been to deny, distract, and dismiss. We repeat our demand that the Russian Federation declare its novichok programme in full, commit to full transparency, and accept its responsibility for this grave violation of the Convention. In this regard, we are committed co-sponsors of the joint statement seeking immediate action on the poisoning of Mr Navalny.

This year, the Conference suspended the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic following the conclusions of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), according to which the Syrian Government likely used chemical weapons in attacks in Ltamenah and Saraqib. Syria must be held accountable for all of its violations of international law, including chemical weapons use. Syria must come into full compliance with the Convention. It must cooperate with the Declaration Assessment Team and fully declare any and all chemical weapons it has retained, in keeping with the obligation of all States Parties under the Convention. Regrettably, Syria's cooperation with the Technical Secretariat has deteriorated in recent months, for example, with the delay in the issuing of visas, which has hampered the deployment of missions to Syria. These are not the actions of a State Party committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention. The onus lies on Syria to take steps to comply with its obligations. Canada joins the other co-sponsors of the joint statement, in which we express our dismay and insist that Syria comply immediately with its obligations.

Last week, Canada co-hosted an event entitled "The Last Straw: How Chemical Weapons Impact Women and Break Communities". Among the speakers were women survivors of chemical attacks in Syria by the Assad regime. Their lives are not numbers in a statistic. Their suffering is real, and drives us in our commitment to hold those who use these weapons—which should have been eliminated years ago—to account.

It is also important that we better understand how societies are affected by chemical weapons use. The stories of the women who spoke at Friday's event are not unique. It has been demonstrated that women and children are especially vulnerable in armed conflict, and that they tend to bear the brunt of the violence, despite not taking part in the fighting. It is also widely recognised that women are agents of peace who help to rebuild the fabric of society after an armed conflict. Violently targeting women damages communities' ability to recover from armed conflict, especially when chemical weapons are used. We hope that the work we

highlighted is one more step towards future efforts in the areas of non-proliferation, disarmament, assistance, protection, and international cooperation, enriched by a deeper analysis of gender and other demographic considerations.

In a spirit of inclusion and respect for the diversity of opinion, Canada expresses its disappointment that, yet again this year, a small number of States Parties are preventing the participation in the Conference of non-governmental organisations that have clearly demonstrated that their work promotes the object and purpose of the Convention. This has happened without any justification and runs directly counter to the Convention's intent of partnership and cooperation. Canada is one of 50 countries that have expressed their concern about this in a statement delivered at the beginning of this session.

Finally, Canada remains committed to supporting and resourcing the OPCW. We have provided 10 million dollars for the Centre for Chemistry and Technology which, we believe, will allow the Organisation to evolve as a cutting-edge institution leading the work to end the re-emergence of chemical weapons use and pioneering the peaceful uses of chemistry. 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 continue to explore opportunities to strengthen the OPCW and uphold the Convention.

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