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CANADA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LISA HELFAND
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA TO THE OPCW
AT THE 100TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Excellencies and distinguished colleagues,

Canada congratulates His Excellency Ambassador Ziad M. D. Al Atiyah of Saudi Arabia on his new role as Chairperson of the Executive Council (the Council). I assure him of Canada's full support and cooperation in leading the work of Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) this week and beyond.

The prohibition against the use of chemical weapons, as outlined in Article I of the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention), has not been respected several times in the past decade, and those who have violated this norm have yet to be held fully accountable.

Canada condemns in the strongest terms the Russian regime's unjustifiable and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. This invasion demonstrates utter contempt for the international rules-based order and the United Nations Charter

The Russian delegation continues to allege that Ukraine plans to use chemical weapons, but presents no evidence and requests no action by the OPCW Technical Secretariat (the Secretariat). In truth, Russia's allegations are merely components of a disinformation campaign, a course of action it has decided to adopt at the OPCW and in other forums. The potential for chemical weapons use by the Russian Federation, including as a false-flag attack in an attempt to justify its own aggression, remains a grave concern.

Russia also continues to deny involvement in the 2020 attempted assassination of Alexei Navalny with a novichok-type nerve agent, a chemical weapon developed by the Soviet Union and used previously by Russian agents in the attempted assassination of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, the United Kingdom. We deplore Russia's lack of cooperation on this matter. Russia has ignored the questions put forward by a group of countries, including Canada, and has not carried out any investigation into this attack.

We call on the Russian Federation to ensure that those who used chemical weapons on its territory are held accountable, while also demanding that Russia respect international law and itself not use chemical weapons. The world is watching us, and those who use chemical weapons—anywhere—must be held accountable.



Meanwhile, the Syrian Arab Republic also remains in non-compliance with the Convention. Legitimate and credible authorities have identified at least eight incidents in which the Assad regime used chemical weapons during the Syrian conflict. Despite more than 20 consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team, the Syrian initial declaration still contains errors, gaps, and falsehoods, and the eight confirmed chemical attacks carried out by the regime took place after the destruction of Syria's declared stockpiles. Syria's violations of the Convention are flagrant, intentional, and ongoing, and Syria continues to implement a vitriolic disinformation campaign, with the help of its allies Russia and Iran, to obfuscate the truth.

Canada and the international community will continue to apply pressure on the Assad regime to clarify the discrepancies in its declaration, to destroy its remaining chemical weapons capabilities, and to ensure compliance with the Convention. We must ensure that all those responsible for perpetrating the use of chemical weapons are held accountable for this heinous crime. We ask that the members of the Council remain seized of this issue.

While we look to hold those who violate the Convention to account, we also continue to hope for a future world free from chemical weapons.

Preparations have already begun in anticipation of the Fifth Review Conference. Initial consultations, expertly led by Ambassador Kuusing of Estonia, have been fruitful, and we are hopeful that they will help set us up for success next May. Canada expects to table a paper on gender-based analysis and the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, working with a range of partners.

Canada is pleased to recognise the commitment of the Secretariat in advancing gender equality and diversity at the OPCW. This is a cultural change that requires prolonged and sustained effort. But inclusion is the way of the future, and helps every organisation try to get better. The OPCW can only benefit. As an international gender champion, I am personally committed to supporting this institutional change, not only at the OPCW, but also within my own delegation, to ensure we all do our part.

Inclusion means more than ensuring the Secretariat staff come from diverse backgrounds. We must also take care that everyone who has something meaningful to say is heard. To this end, we continue to support the inclusion of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the work of the OPCW, especially in the next Conference of the States Parties and Review Conference. No State Party should have the right to unilaterally prohibit a legitimate NGO from attending and expressing their views. We sincerely hope that the States Parties will find common ground and ensure that the views of civil society will be taken into account.

The opening of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) is also approaching fast. We are pleased that construction remains on target and will be finished some time next year. Canada is proud to be the top national donor among 52 States, the European Union, and multiple civil society organisations. We are investing in the future of the OPCW and are eager for the ChemTech Centre to begin its activities, especially its critical capacity-building work and its training of the next generations of OPCW inspectors.

Five weeks ago, Canada was proud to announce a new contribution of EUR 1.8 million to the OPCW. This money will go to improving physical and cybersecurity resilience at the OPCW; to enhancing chemical incident response capacities through the “CHEMEX Africa” programme; to providing training for African customs institutions involved in monitoring the import and export of toxic chemicals; and to supporting the trust fund for Syria missions.

I ask that the full version of this statement be made an official-series document of the 100th Session of the Executive Council and that it be published on Catalyst and the public website of the OPCW.

Thank you.

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