



**OPCW**

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**CANADA**

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

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

Canada welcomes the election of Ambassador Vusimuzi Madonsela of the Republic of South Africa as Chairperson of the Twenty-Seventh Session of Conference of the States Parties (“the Conference”). We assure him of our full confidence and cooperation, and thank outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway, for his stewardship of the Conference over the last year.

Our delegation suffered an immeasurable loss this year with the tragic passing of our Deputy Permanent Representative, Ms Sumita Dixit. Ms Dixit served in our delegation since 2018 with an unwavering commitment to a more inclusive and peaceful future. Her infectious optimism for a better tomorrow and strongly held value of inclusion continue to inspire us daily to give a voice to those whose needs and perspectives are not represented.

With her dedication to service for Canada and unbreakable spirit in the face of grave illness, Ms Dixit worked tirelessly to improve our awareness of the gaps in representation of women in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”). One of the many results of her efforts will be a paper about gender equality in the implementation of the Convention, which Canada is contributing to the Fifth Review Conference.

In early 2023, following a broad consultative process with States Parties and the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”), we will launch this paper and work towards broad cross-regional endorsement.

It is important all stakeholders participate in this effort. Early consultations show that the Secretariat has already laid the foundation for success in advancing gender equality and diversity, particularly in human resources and assistance and protection. We introduced this topic to National Authorities in the recent annual meeting, and are pleased that the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach took note of Canada’s request to consider how gender equality can be promoted in education and outreach activities.



There is much to be done before the Review Conference. Here and now, at this Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference, we stand ready to support the Convention and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in every way possible.

This Conference must adopt the draft decision on the updated Programme and Budget for 2023. We adopted the biennial budget at the last Conference, and this update requests only the most necessary resources to keep pace with the global inflationary environment.

Of course, we are also concerned by the financial challenges caused by the late or non-payment of assessed contributions, including by a small number of States Parties which have chosen to withhold part of their required fees for political reasons. This harms all programmes of the OPCW. Canada urges all States Parties to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time.

In this year of the twenty-fifth anniversary since the entry into force of the Convention, we celebrate the destruction of 99% of declared chemical weapons stocks and note that complete destruction will take place within the next 12 months. Unfortunately, everything we have done this year is in the shadow of aggression, chemical provocation, and violations of the Convention.

We condemn the illegal, unprovoked, and unjustifiable war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and we remain concerned by reports that Russian forces are committing war crimes and may be preparing to use chemical weapons.

If Russia deploys chemical weapons in Ukraine or deliberately targets Ukrainian chemical facilities, it will be held accountable. Using chemical weapons or engaging in any military preparations to use them is a direct violation of Article I of the Convention.

Ukraine, for its part, is a member in good standing with the Convention. Accusations that Ukrainian armed forces are preparing to use chemical weapons are baseless. Russia has used such lies and deceptions in the OPCW for years. In 2022, Russia used these disinformation tactics also in their invocation of Article V of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), in which they wasted States Parties' time and resources repeating baseless claims and other nonsense in an attempt to justify their aggression in Ukraine. When BTWC States Parties saw through their lies, the Russian Federation brought their accusations to the United Nations Security Council, wherein their proposal was voted down. Such behaviour does not befit a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, a country entrusted to uphold global peace and security.

It has been more than two years since the attempted assassination of Alexei Navalny with a novichok-type chemical weapon. Since then, the questions that we, along with over 40 States Parties, have posed under Article IX remain unanswered. No investigation has taken place in Russia. Russian responses to our legitimate questions have served only to deny, distract, and dismiss. We repeat our demand that the Russian Federation fully declare its novichok programme, commit to full transparency, and we ask that it be held accountable for this grave violation of the Convention.

Shielded by Russia's veto in the Security Council, the Syrian Arab Republic has faced few consequences for its blatant violations of the Convention. Last year, the Conference suspended the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic after the conclusions of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) that the Syrian Government used chemical weapons

in attacks in Ltamenah and Saraqib. Since then, Syria took numerous punitive actions toward the OPCW, ranging from hostile tactics to delay inspections to flat-out refusal to allow inspectors to visit. Syria's actions defy the decisions taken by the Executive Council and the Conference and flaunt the long-standing norm respected by a majority of States Parties. Such behaviour is unjustifiable and Syria's current posture is untenable. Our resolve to hold Syria accountable for its violations of international law remains steadfast, and we call on all States Parties to remain seized of this matter.

Canada expresses its disappointment that yet again this year we see a very small number of States Parties preventing the participation in the Conference of non-governmental organisations that clearly demonstrate that their work promotes the object and purpose of the Convention. This is done without any justification, and goes directly against the intent of partnership and cooperation enshrined in the Convention. We call on all States Parties to express their support for an inclusive dialogue with all stakeholders who are putting their time and resources into strengthening the Convention.

Canada welcomes the progress on the construction of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre). When the Centre begins its activities in the new year, a new era of scientific exchange and cooperation at the OPCW will begin. We look forward to participating in further discussions about the full package of activities for the Centre proposed by the Secretariat, and will work with the OPCW to ensure that these activities are devised with a gender equality-sensitive lens.

Canada's contribution toward the ChemTech Centre (CAD 10 million) came from the Weapons Threat Reduction Program, our flagship contribution to the G7-led Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. This programme has contributed over CAD 44 million to the OPCW since 2011 to support disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. We would like to see the Secretariat engage more strategically with the Global Partnership in the future.

Thank you.

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