



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Twenty-Seventh Session
28 November – 1 December 2022

C-27/NAT.9
28 November 2022
ENGLISH only

IRELAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR BRENDAN ROGERS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRELAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Ireland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I will make the following statement in a national capacity.

Let me begin by extending my sincere gratitude to the outgoing Chair of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway for all of his work over the past year, and congratulate and welcome our new chair H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Madonsela of South Africa. I can you assure of Ireland's full support in the work ahead.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Director-General Fernando Arias and all of the staff of the Technical Secretariat (the Secretariat) for their excellent work and perseverance over the last year, despite the many challenges we have faced.

We convene here at a time of crisis.

Since the Conference last met there has been a seismic shift in the dynamics of the international community. This year commenced with the illegal, unjustified and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Since February, we have witnessed a continuation of illegal acts by the Russian forces on Ukrainian territory.

We face an expansionist power, brutally invading and occupying a peaceful neighbour. However, let me be clear, this is not just a European or "Western" issue. All States should be gravely concerned by the possibility of a world where sovereignty and territorial integrity can be blatantly violated, and where international law is not respected.

We must not permit either threats of chemical weapons use, or unsubstantiated claims of chemical weapons capabilities, to go unchecked. We welcome the OPCW Secretariat's continued monitoring of the situation, particularly around declared chemical industrial sites in Ukraine. Any use of chemical weapons, including as part of a false flag operation, is a clear



violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”), and will not be tolerated. Ireland rejects efforts to sow disinformation in this area.

Ireland’s consistent position, which we have articulated at the OPCW Executive Council and many other fora including the United Nations Security Council, is that Russia must immediately cease hostilities, unconditionally withdraw from the entire territory of Ukraine, and refrain from any real or threatened use of force of any kind against any sovereign State.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time that Russia has been the subject of debate in the work of the Convention. Ireland unequivocally condemns the attempted assassination of Mr Alexei Navalny with a novichok nerve agent in August 2020. We call on the Russian Federation to provide a credible explanation and address the doubts and concerns raised in the questions posed under Article IX by States Parties. We reiterate our call for the Russian Federation to cooperate fully with the OPCW.

Mr Chairperson, it is frustrating that after almost ten years of working to ensure Syria fulfils its obligations under the Convention, we are unfortunately no closer to closing this file. Syria’s persistent unwillingness to genuinely cooperate with the Secretariat is the sole reason behind this lack of progress.

For many years we have listened to Syria try to justify its inaction and failure to adhere to its obligations under the Convention. These excuses ring hollow and are neither acceptable nor credible. The simple fact is that refusing to grant visas to all members of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) is not cooperation. Failing to provide information to complete their initial declaration is not cooperation. Stalling progress on the holding of a meeting between Director-General Arias and Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad is not cooperation.

It is essential that Syria ends its prevarication, and engages in a serious, urgent and meaningful way with the Secretariat. It is only through genuine engagement, that the OPCW will be able to provide the necessary assurance that Syria’s chemical weapons programme is verifiably and definitively a thing of the past.

Ireland is pleased to support the joint statement on this issue drafted by the United Kingdom and welcomes the continued efforts to keep this matter to the fore of our work.

We are all aware that the last twelve months have been economically challenging for every State Party. Of course, the OPCW has not been immune to these challenges. It is essential that the Organisation has the funds necessary to fulfil their mandate. Ireland considers that the Draft Revised Programme and Budget for 2023 is a reasonable response to an unforeseen set of circumstances. We encourage each State Party to support the proposed budget and pay their assessed contributions in full and on time.

Mr Chairperson, Ireland welcomes the commitment of the Director-General to gender equality and to ensuring the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women and men at all levels of the Organisation. Mainstreaming gender within the Organisation requires continued attention. Both to ensure the optimal work environment for everyone at the OPCW, regardless of their gender, and also, because doing so is critical to enhancing the decision-making process within the Organisation. Research in the area of disarmament has shown that more diverse participation ultimately produces better outcomes and results. We encourage the Secretariat to keep us informed on progress in addressing the results of the gender and diversity audit. As an international gender champion, I am personally committed to advancing this issue both within

and outside of the OPCW. We thank all those States Parties that have already endorsed the joint statement on gender at this meeting and we encourage others to join this statement and the cross-regional efforts to advance this important issue.

Ireland attaches great importance to the involvement of civil society and the chemical industry within the work of the Convention. In addition to the expertise of the Secretariat upon which all States Parties rely, our work is clearly enriched by input from experts from these sectors. Ireland is disappointed that the transparent and fair participation of civil society in the work of the Conference is being undermined by a small minority of States Parties. Ireland will continue our efforts to champion the invaluable role that civil society plays; and remains open to considering ways to ensure the accreditation process is effective, transparent and facilitates the participation of a wide diversity of NGOs. We are also pleased to endorse the joint statement drafted by the Netherlands on this important issue.

As we move towards the completion of the destruction phase of our work, it is important for States to collectively lay out a roadmap for the Organisation in the years ahead. The Fifth Review Conference taking place next year is the opportunity for us to lay out our priorities and a clear direction for the future. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to H.E. Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia for his excellent guidance in his capacity as chair of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference. Ireland will continue to actively contribute to the Open-Ended Working Group and is committed to working collectively to strengthen the Convention. I would urge all States Parties to be constructive and innovative to find the unity necessary to make real progress at this important Conference.

Mr Chairperson, despite the many challenges which this Organisation faces, we must not lose sight of the great successes which have defined and continue to define the OPCW since its establishment. The Convention is the most successful disarmament treaty in the world with 99% of the worlds declared chemical weapon stockpiles verifiably destroyed. That is undoubtedly in no small part due to the commitment and dedication of the Secretariat, but also the yearning of State Parties to create a world where future generations will not have to live in fear of the disaster these weapons can cause. As we move to the future, we must keep the goal of a world free from chemical weapons as the guiding principle for all of our actions.

I would kindly ask to consider this statement as an official document and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you.

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