

CSP 27 General Debate UK statement

Thank you Mr Chairperson.

First, as I have not yet spoken, let me congratulate you on your appointment. We look forward to working with you throughout this session.

Let me also thank the Director General and his staff in the Technical Secretariat for all the work that they have undertaken over the past year towards eradicating the world of chemical weapons. We were delighted to welcome him to the United Kingdom a few weeks ago, reaffirming our support to his work and that of the organisation.

The UK's national statement was recorded by Minister Baroness Goldie and is available online and so I shall be brief but I would like to make a short statement.

Mr Chairperson

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is an appalling violation of international law. There is mounting evidence of systematic war crimes. Russia's actions have global ramifications, particularly in terms of food and energy security. It is utterly unacceptable.

The Russian government should respect the views of the 143 members of the UN General Assembly and "immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw" from Ukraine.

But Mr Chairperson,

We are here to oversee the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and to ensure that chemical weapons are never used.

So let us be clear - Russia's repeated use of the OPCW to spread baseless allegations against Ukraine is unacceptable. The Russian Delegation cannot defend the indefensible. Russia should focus on meeting its own commitments under the Convention.

Russia's use of Novichok against the Skripals in the United Kingdom in 2018 was horrific. A public inquiry is underway into the circumstances of Dawn Sturgess' tragic death. Three Russian nationals have been charged with chemical weapons offences.

The Russian state has also used chemical weapons within their own borders. Alexey Navalny's poisoning with a nerve agent in 2020 was appalling, as was Russia's subsequent attempted cover-up.

Russia must account for and give up its chemical weapons programme.

Mr Chairperson

Syria is another State Party showing disregard for the rules.

The Syrian authorities have undeniably used chemical weapons against their own people on multiple occasions.

Syria must live up to its obligations and give up its chemical weapons programme in full.

Mr Chairperson,

Yesterday, Director General Arias stated that the OPCW 'is delivering and is adapting' in a challenging environment.

The United Kingdom is not complacent about the challenges ahead, whether financial, geopolitical or, indeed, in improving gender equality or regional representation.

But, Mr Chairperson, let us not be in any doubt. This Organisation remains as relevant and as important as ever and there is much still to do. The UK remains in steadfast support of the OPCW and its vital work.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.