

Agenda item 9: Addressing the threat from chemical weapons use (Russia/Ukraine)

Thank you Mr Chair,

The United Kingdom was pleased to support the joint statement on Russia's action in the OPCW with regard to Ukraine which was delivered by Germany on behalf of 54 States Parties.

The United Kingdom stands with Ukraine and all those that have condemned Russia's unprovoked and premeditated assault on Ukraine's sovereign territory.

Prior to its military invasion of Ukraine in February this year, Russia had never once raised concerns about Ukraine's adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Since February they have circulated more than 20 note verbales, without a shred of evidence to back up their wild accusations.

The behaviour of the Russian Federation is extremely worrying. When all the evidence points to Russian culpability they fall back on promoting improbable conspiracy theories.

The United Kingdom is regrettably very familiar with this Russian trait. We witnessed it on an industrial scale after Russian military agents brought Novichok nerve agent into the UK in 2018 to use as a chemical weapon. The reckless assault in Salisbury was then repeated in Russia in 2020, this time targeting a Russian opposition politician Alexey Navalny.

Russia must fully declare and destroy the stocks it holds of these banned chemical weapons. The Russian authorities must be held to account for their actions and they must address the concerns expressed in this organisation about Russia's chemical weapons programme.

Mr Chair,

Russia's track record of chemical weapons use and its blatant territorial ambitions poses a grave challenge to us all. The threats made by Russian proxies about chemical weapons use in Ukraine are abhorrent.

One of the great strengths of the Chemical Weapons Convention is the ability to provide assistance and protection to those facing the use and threat of use of chemical weapons. Russia's illegal war in Ukraine underscores the importance of those provisions for all States Parties;

and we welcome the Article Ten related support that has been offered to Ukraine.

Thank you Mr Chair.