

Chair,

Congratulations on your appointment. You have the full support of the Australian delegation.

Australia is a strong supporter of the Chemical Weapons Convention and has been since its inception. There is no doubt that the Fifth Review Conference is a pivotal one. We have achieved much in the global effort to reduce the use and proliferation of chemical weapons and are close to the destruction of the last declared chemical weapons stockpiles. But we are facing new challenges. As a matter of priority, this Review Conference must send a message to the world – that the use of chemical weapons is prohibited, and we must prevent its re-emergence.

What we have collectively achieved under Director General Arias' leadership is impressive. The OPCW has significantly progressed the CWC mandate through actions such as passing decisions on the scheduling of Novichok chemical agents and on the aerosolized use

of CNS-acting chemicals. The new ChemTech Centre will provide additional capacity for the organisation.

Australia is proud of our work with our Pacific and ASEAN partners in supporting the elevation of their voices on issues important to CWC implementation. Australia recently concluded a successful OPCW partnership program with Malaysia. We are now looking at a laboratory twinning program. We look forward to identifying other regional program opportunities.

Last year, Australia was delighted to welcome Director General Arias at the Subregional Forum, in Brisbane on National Implementation for Pacific Island States, co-hosted with Malaysia and the OPCW. We welcome attendance of delegations from the Pacific at this meeting today. Voices of the Pacific have long been missing and we look forward to collaborating with the Pacific on how they can be better engaged in these important global discussions.

Australia reiterates its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances. There can be no impunity for those who use chemical weapons or those that attempt to hide chemical weapons programs. Without accountability, the Convention will not meet its mandate for a world free from chemical weapons. This is reliant on a strong attribution mechanism.

Export controls are an enabler for the peaceful uses of chemistry. They do not inhibit legitimate trade. As per permanent chair of the Australia Group, we are proud of our efforts to support States to meet their CWC obligations by controlling exports of sensitive dual use goods and technology.

Let me conclude, Australia reaffirms its ongoing commitment to the OPCW and Director-General Arias in supporting our shared goal to have a world free of chemical weapons.

I ask that this statement be made an official-series document and published on Catalyst and the public website of the OPCW.

Thank you.