



OPCW

Review Conference

Fifth Session
15 – 19 May 2023

RC-5/NAT.21
15 May 2023
ENGLISH only

IRELAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR BRENDAN ROGERS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRELAND TO THE OPCW AT THE FIFTH
SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO
REVIEW THE OPERATION OF THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**

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

Ireland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and would like to add the following in a national capacity.

At the outset, I would like to express our congratulations to you, H.E. Ambassador Van der Kwast on your appointment as the Chairperson of the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Fifth Review Conference). Your stewardship and guidance will be invaluable in these critical times, and you can count on our full support in the work ahead.

I would also like to express our appreciation to H.E. Ambassador Kuusing of Estonia, Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group. Under your guidance, and through a transparent and inclusive process, the work of the OEWG has facilitated progress across a range of important issues.

Ireland would also like to take this opportunity to commend the expertise, professionalism and impartiality of the OPCW Technical Secretariat. While the Organisation continues to face a host of challenges, under the able leadership of Director-General Fernando Arias, it is effectively fulfilling its mandate.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is under unprecedented pressure today. Since the Fourth Review Conference, we have witnessed a rapidly deteriorating security environment, the continued use of chemical weapons and a dangerous erosion of the universal norm against their use. It is utterly unacceptable that over a century after their first use, chemical weapons continue to pose a grave and inhumane threat to international peace and security.

Syria's repeated use of chemical weapons against innocent civilians is an abhorrent violation of the Convention and international law, which Ireland condemns in the strongest possible terms. Ireland fully supports the work of the Secretariat over the past five years to address the



use of chemical weapons in Syria including through the work of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT).

We reiterate our call for Russia to provide credible and substantive answers to the questions posed by 45 States Parties under Article IX with regards to the poisoning of Alexei Navalny in August 2020. We also reiterate our call to Russia. Stop shielding Syria from accountability and spreading disinformation about the investigative work of the Technical Secretariat in Syria.

In addition to Russia's effort to undermine the OPCW's work on chemical weapons, Ireland condemns the campaign to spread unfounded allegations against Ukraine and others regarding so called planned provocations involving chemical weapons use in Ukraine. We must not permit either threats of chemical weapons use, or unsubstantiated claims of chemical weapons capabilities, to go unchecked. We welcome the OPCW Technical 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, and cannot be tolerated. Ireland rejects efforts to sow disinformation in this area.

Ireland condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's brutal and illegal invasion of the sovereign territory of Ukraine. This is not just a European or "Western" issue. It is a breach of the United Nations Charter. All States should be gravely concerned by the possibility of a world where sovereignty and territorial integrity can be blatantly violated, and international law is not respected. Ireland's consistent position is that Russia must immediately cease hostilities and unconditionally withdraw from the entire territory of Ukraine.

International cooperation and assistance (ICA) is a fundamental aspect of the functioning of this Organisation. In the global fight against the use of chemical weapons, providing assistance and training to States Parties that need it benefits us all. In the next five years, it will be essential for the Organisation and States Parties to continue ICA activities and trainings and furthermore, to ensure there is sufficient and stable funding for such trainings. On top of this, without a well-functioning verification regime, the OPCW will struggle to realise the mandate of the Convention. As the twenty-first century advances, so too does our ability to develop new technology. In this context, it will be important that the OPCW verification regime is sufficiently robust to deal with new and emerging threats. In this regard, we welcome the recent opening of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology which will serve as a valuable asset for the OPCW in carrying out both ICA and verification related activities.

As we approach the milestone of the destruction of all declared chemical weapon stockpiles, it is imperative that the verification, inspection and destruction knowledge accrued over the last 25 years is retained. In this context, Ireland emphasises the importance of strengthening the knowledge management practices within the Organisation and amending the existing tenure policy in order to grant the Director-General some flexibility to extend contracts as deemed necessary.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Director-General Fernando Arias for his personal commitment to achieving gender equality and mainstreaming a gender perspective in the work of the Organisation. The OPCW has made great strides in recent years to progress the issue of gender equality and we hope that the momentum that has grown around this issue throughout the Open-Ended Working Group process serves as a stepping-stone to further strengthen gender equality in the implementation of the Convention. Ireland also notes

the importance of creating a Secretariat that is geographically diverse. We welcome the proposal for the establishment of a working group to further address the topic of geographic diversity and look forward to further discussions in the coming months. It is well established that a wide diversity of views is essential for decision making and in helping us tackle the challenges we face with greater effectiveness.

Ireland attaches great importance to the involvement of civil society and the chemical industry within the work of the Convention. Ireland is pleased to co-sponsor Germany's joint statement and non-paper on this topic. We reiterate the need to amend the 2013 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) accreditation guidelines in order to facilitate a more open, transparent and inclusive approach.

Mr Chairperson, in the face of today's threats, we must all reaffirm our shared commitment to achieve the core aim of the Convention. The Fifth Review Conference is a valuable opportunity for us to look to the future and to ensure the OPCW has a clear mandate in the period ahead. Ireland is playing an active part in discussions at this session of the Review Conference and in the work to strengthen the effective implementation of the Convention.

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

Thank you.

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