



UK Delegation to the OPCW

***Statement to the 104th Session of the Executive Council
of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical
Weapons***

***by Her Excellency Joanna Roper, Permanent
Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland***

Mr Chairperson, Director General, Excellencies, colleagues,

We acknowledge the progress made in recent months towards the eradication of the use of chemical weapons, including the opening of the ChemTech Centre, the expansion of capacity building activities in support of States Parties and the destruction of all declared chemical weapon stockpiles, as set out by the Director General this morning. Thank you to the Director General, the Technical Secretariat and all those leading working groups and clusters of issues. Despite this progress, we know that challenges remain.

In August, we joined other States Parties in commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Assad regime's horrific chemical weapons attack on Ghouta, which killed 1,400 innocent civilians - including hundreds of women and children. At the end of this week, we will recognise another important date – 10 years since Syria joined the Chemical Weapons Convention. This should be a moment to mark, as a step towards a world without chemical weapons. Instead, we reflect on at least 9 subsequent Assad regime chemical weapons attacks and the further, significant loss of innocent life in egregious violation of international law in Syria.

These attacks confirm beyond all doubt that, in spite of repeated Syrian Regime assurances, Syria did not declare and destroy all of its chemical weapons in 2013. The Syrian Regime has continued to obfuscate and block progress to resolve serious outstanding issues with its declaration. Until these outstanding issues are resolved, we cannot rule out the possibility that the Assad regime will use chemical weapons again.

Mr Chair,

We acknowledge the contents of the Noted Verbale submitted by Syria, but note that without meaningful engagement with the OPCW, its chemical weapons programme will continue to

pose a threat to regional and international security. We must uphold the Convention by fortifying our pursuit of: Syrian compliance with the CWC, accountability and risk reduction.

Mr Chair,

Russia continues to make baseless allegations of chemical attacks in Ukraine and the prospect of Ukrainian 'chemical provocation'. Considering Russia's recent track record of using chemical weapons, we are gravely concerned that these allegations could be used as the pretext for Russian use of chemical weapons in their illegal and abhorrent violation of Ukraine's sovereign and internationally recognised territory. Any use of chemical weapons by Russia in Ukraine would have severe consequences.

Ukraine's Notes Verbale to the Technical Secretariat and a Russian state media report indicate widespread Russian use of riot control agents in the prosecution of its illegal war, in contravention of Article I of the CWC. We look forward to Russian answers to Article IX questions posed in a Note Verbale submitted to the Technical Secretariat on 6 October. The UK will remain steadfast in its support of Ukraine's efforts to protect itself against the threat of chemical weapons and to investigate possible use, noting the option set out in the Convention and in decisions of policy-making organs.

Mr Chair,

We recognise important work, supported by the majority of states, to enhance the effectiveness of the OPCW and ensure its continuing viability. We commend progress made to establish the Working Group on Geographical Representation and to drive discussions on tenure policy.

We also welcome States Parties' spirit of cooperation and the work of the Technical Secretariat to finalise the biennial budget. We recognise that the trade-offs are difficult, but we remain committed to supporting efforts to achieve affordable outcomes that protect

OPCW core activity. Let me close by acknowledging all the hard work by the Director General and colleagues that has gone into pursuing these outcomes. Thank you Mr Chair.