



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Twenty-First Session
28 November – 2 December 2016

C-21/NAT.24
29 November 2016
ENGLISH only

IRELAND

**STATEMENT BY MS CAROLINE WHELAN
CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES OF THE EMBASSY OF IRELAND AT THE
TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,

Allow me to first express our congratulations to you, Ambassador Christoph Israng of Germany, on your appointment as incoming Chair of the Conference of the States Parties. I would also like to express our warm thanks and appreciation to Ambassador Eduardo Ibarrola Nicolín of Mexico for his excellent efforts as outgoing Chair.

Ireland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Chemical weapons represent an entire category of weapons of mass destruction that impact civilians in a cruel and devastating manner. Ireland believes that all weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery remain among the most immediate and pressing global threats to humanity. Last year marked the 100th anniversary of the first use of chemical weapons during the First World War. Since that time we have made valiant efforts to eliminate chemical weapons from our world.

We were pleased to support the resolution on chemical weapons at this year's First Committee and would like to thank Poland for its efforts in ensuring the resolution was passed by a strong majority. We would also like to express our deep appreciation to the members of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), the Director-General and Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, along with the members of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), for their dedication and professionalism in investigating chemical weapons attacks in Syria.

Allow me to reaffirm Ireland's view that the use of chemical weapons by anybody, anywhere and under any circumstances must be rigorously condemned by the international community. We believe that those who are responsible for these reprehensible acts must be held accountable, for violations of international law cannot go unpunished and unaddressed. Last month Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Charles Flanagan TD, stated that the situation in Syria should be referred to the International Criminal Court in order to ensure legal accountability for the victims of these unspeakable crimes.

Ireland welcomes the adoption by the Security Council of a resolution to renew the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism. This year-long extension allows for a continuation of



vital investigative work in a place where civilians have experienced first-hand the devastating effects of chemical weapons attacks from both the Syrian Armed Forces and the so-called “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant” (ISIL), as identified in the third and fourth JIM Reports. We request that all stakeholders engage fully with the efforts of the FFM and the JIM, and that there are no attempts to hinder or delay the work of the Declaration Assessment Team.

Ireland is also gravely concerned by the reported use of chemical weapons by non-State actors in Iraq. We welcome the OPCW’s efforts to investigate these incidents and we encourage Iraq to continue to work closely with the technical experts at the OPCW to address this serious issue.

On a more positive note, Ireland commends Libya, other States Parties and the OPCW for the progress to date in the removal and destruction of chemical precursors from Libya. This important development highlights the results that can be achieved when there is full cooperation between States Parties.

As the twenty-first century advances, so too does our ability to develop and foster new technology. In this context, it will be important to recognise new developments in the use of chemistry, as well as new types of potential chemical weapons agents, to ensure sufficient protections are put in place to keep the global community safe from chemical attacks. We support the Australian paper on central nervous system-acting chemicals, and its call for further discussions on this subject.

As part of our own practical contribution to countering WMD, the Irish Defence Forces, in collaboration with the ICRC, has for the last two years delivered training for aid workers in surviving the effects of a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attack. We hope to continue with the delivery of similar training courses in the future.

The Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force in 1997 with the aim of making the world safe from the threat of chemical warfare. Its adoption, as stated by the Director-General of the OPCW, H.E. Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, “signalled the beginning of an era in which chemical weapons were to be eliminated forever”. That era is within our grasp. The universalisation of the Convention must remain an objective for States Parties if we are to truly achieve success. We encourage all states that have yet to join the Convention to do so without further delay. Ireland is fully committed to ensuring that all 192 states which are party to the Convention comply with each and every one of its requirements.

In closing, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Conference and be published on the OPCW website and extranet.

Thank You.