

**NEW ZEALAND****STATEMENT BY MARISA MACPHERSON
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Thank you, Madam Chair. Allow me to join others in congratulating you on your election and wishing you every success. Thanks also to the Director-General for his update, and the Technical Secretariat for their preparations for this meeting.

The Executive Council has before it two reports from the Director-General regarding Syria's initial declaration. New Zealand greatly appreciates the work of the Technical Secretariat and its Declaration Assessment Team in what are complex and difficult circumstances. The reports are comprehensive and robust, and the Director-General and his team should be commended for their work.

New Zealand wishes to express its deep concerns in response to these reports. After more than 100 technical meetings, 28 field visits, 122 field samples, and 70 interviews, the Technical Secretariat is not able to resolve the gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies in Syria's declaration. The number of outstanding issues requiring clarification has increased steadily over time. It is particularly concerning that a majority of sample results indicated the presence of unexpected or undeclared chemical compounds, and that new information provided by Syria has in many cases raised new questions or presented a considerable change in narrative. The Declaration Assessment Team considers that many of the explanations provided by Syria are not scientifically or technically plausible, and that its lack of access to senior leadership within the Syrian chemical weapons programme has precluded its understanding of the full scope and activities of Syria's programme.

The content of these recent reports raises significant doubts regarding Syria's compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. In order to preserve the integrity of this Organisation and the Convention, we call on the Executive Council to take a firm stance in response. In this regard, New Zealand supports the draft decision proposed by the United States delegation and we hope that the Council will act unanimously to adopt it.

New Zealand also strongly supports the work of the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission and the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism. The ongoing and credible allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria are disturbing. As we have said before, the international response must match the seriousness of these allegations, and those responsible must be held to account.



We condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances. The use of chemical weapons by non-State actors poses a significant threat to international security and it is important that the Executive Council puts on record what the OPCW is doing to address the issue. For this reason, New Zealand is co-sponsoring the proposed draft decision on this topic and we hope that the Executive Council will adopt it at this session.

New Zealand has recently finalised a contribution to the trust fund for the Scientific Advisory Board. The Scientific Advisory Board plays a crucial role in ensuring that the OPCW and its policy-making organs are able to take due account of developments in science and technology, and we are pleased to support its work. We hope that others will also be in a position to contribute to this trust fund.

Finally, Madam Chair, New Zealand continues to support the call for consultations on the weaponisation of central nervous system-acting chemicals in law enforcement. We share the concerns raised by other States Parties in relation to the health and safety risks of such chemicals, and the possibility of their deliberate misuse.

I ask that this statement be issued as an official document and posted on the OPCW's external server and public website.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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