

**NEW ZEALAND****STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JANET LOWE  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW AT THE  
EIGHTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks also to the Director-General for his update, and to the Technical Secretariat for their preparations for this meeting.

Madam Chair, this Executive Council session takes place at a critical point in the history of the Chemical Weapons Convention. I am speaking of the third report of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

New Zealand strongly supports the work of the JIM in extremely difficult circumstances. We join others in expressing our grave concerns with the findings of the JIM's third report. The report showed clearly that the Syrian Government, a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, has violated the Convention and relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. We condemn the actions of the Syrian Government and call on all members of this Executive Council to act firmly by adopting a decision that ensures accountability for non-compliance and preserves the integrity of the Convention and this Organisation.

Madam Chair, the JIM report also concluded that "ISIL" used chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, in contravention of international law. We condemn these actions, as we do not condone the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances.

Madam Chair, New Zealand greatly appreciates the ongoing work of the Technical Secretariat in response to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, particularly the work of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and Declaration Assessment Team (DAT).

New Zealand reiterates its grave concern regarding the DAT's findings. As we have said before, the DAT reports are comprehensive and robust, and the Director-General and his team are to be commended for their dedication and professionalism. New Zealand is concerned that the Technical Secretariat has not been able to resolve the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration. Moreover the number of outstanding issues requiring clarification has increased rather than decreased over time. It is particularly concerning that a majority of sample results indicate the presence of unexpected or undeclared chemical compounds, and that new information provided by the Syrian Arab Republic raises more questions than it answers. Again, 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.



Turning to other matters on the agenda for this session, Madam Chair, New Zealand commends the progress in the ongoing international effort to complete the destruction of Libya's remaining chemical weapons. As a demonstration of New Zealand's support for this effort I am pleased to advise that New Zealand is currently finalising a contribution to the Trust Fund for Libya.

Finally Madam Chair, 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 joins other concerned States Parties in co-sponsoring the proposed draft decision on this topic which we hope will be adopted during this session.

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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