



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

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**AUSTRALIA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR BRETT MASON PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE OPCW AT THE EIGHTY-FIFTH  
SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,

Let me inject some optimism into our Council's session today.

As the Director-General mentioned in his opening statement this morning, we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of our Convention in April. All of us can rightly take great pride in this achievement and Australia looks forward to the Director-General's visit in July.

We have 192 States Parties to our Convention and over 95 per cent of the world's chemical weapons stockpiles have been destroyed. While we have not yet achieved universality of our Convention, nor full destruction of chemical stockpiles, we have made great progress and this is a cause for satisfaction and pride in our Organisation. We are the world's most successful disarmament convention. I am sure we will not rest on our laurels and will continue to strive for a world free of chemical weapons.

Australia welcomes the strong field of candidates for the position of Director-General and looks forward to hearing from the candidates during this session of the Council. It will be our responsibility, the duty of this Council, to recommend to the Conference of States Parties the candidate to be the next Director-General. This is a great responsibility, as our decision will influence and shape the future of our Organisation, with the hopeful prospect of further strengthening the Chemical Weapons Convention and the integrity of the OPCW. Our cause rightly deserves the very best leadership.

In this spirit of optimism, Australia and Switzerland, together with other States Parties, continue to encourage support for a start to discussions in the OPCW policy-making organs on the issue of central nervous system-acting chemicals.

Our concern, as many of my colleagues will know, is driven by the use of central nervous system-acting chemicals in aerosol form for law enforcement purposes. For when these chemicals are dispersed through the air, across a wide area, it is impossible to control the dose received by each individual, risking death or serious injury. I encourage other States Parties to join the growing number of voices calling for open, inclusive discussions on this important subject. I note the Director-General's remarks this morning about our need to combat the re-emergence of chemical weapons in any guise.



In this vein, might I also thank the Scientific Advisory Board for their recent in-depth report clarifying riot control agents which are subject to declaration under the Convention (SAB-25/WP.1 dated 27 March 2017). These findings underscore the important and critical role of the Scientific Advisory Board.

Unfortunately, optimism fades in the shadow cast by events in Syria. Let me not test the patience of my colleagues by repeating Australia's concerns with Syria's actions: The incomplete declaration, the obfuscation and the proven use of chemical weapons.

Australia's disappointment, frustration and now outrage with events in Syria tests our resolve as it exhausts our vocabulary. Yet, we know the world has no alternative except to denounce the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. Our common outrage must never grow tired, nor must we ever accept the unacceptable. We must shake ourselves free of any complacency.

The proven use of chemical weapons, these war crimes, can never be just another part of our crowded agenda rendered of less consequence by repetition. We cannot be worn down by inaction, obfuscation or a haze of misinformation.

We must never let violations in Syria become simply an order of business which this Council can live with, because in the long run the world cannot.

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