



SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT OF CANADA TO THE 87TH SESSION OF THE OPCW EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

DELIVERED BY TIMOTHY EDWARDS, ACTING PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

Mr Chair,

The Government of Canada reiterates its strong support for the position and actions taken by the United Kingdom in response to the despicable use of a Novichok-class chemical weapons agent on its territory on March 4. As the British prime minister said yesterday, this is not just an act of attempted murder – it is an affront to the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons and the rules-based international order on which we all depend.

Canada wishes to underline that it remains the prerogative of each State Party to determine whether to employ the provisions of Article IX in requesting clarification on any matter which may cause doubt about compliance of another State Party with the Chemical Weapons Convention. The United Kingdom made a request for clarification directly with the Russian Federation. And as the UK Permanent Representative informed this Council yesterday, Moscow has failed to provide an explanation. Russia's insistence on employing Article IX procedures is an attempt to deflect and delay – pure and simple – so that it need not provide a credible response to uncomfortable questions.

Canada welcomes the UK's continuing engagement with the OPCW, including the government's commitment to share samples of the nerve agent used in Salisbury with the Technical Secretariat for independent analysis. While the UK's immediate response to this incident is by necessity national in character, they are to be commended for recognising the key role the OPCW plays in verifying global compliance with the Convention.

Mr Chair, Canada expects this Council to adopt a short, factual reference in its meeting report expressing concern over the use of a chemical weapon on British soil. We must be consistent and unequivocal in affirming that any use of chemical weapons is intolerable, no matter the circumstances. That is the minimum action this Council must take.

As mentioned by our Prime Minister today, 'Canada is unwavering in its commitment to the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom can count on Canada's full support in efforts to hold Russia to account for this unacceptable and unlawful behaviour'.

We echo the demands of both the European Union and the North Atlantic Council that Russia immediately and fully declare its Novichok program, which amounts to an undeclared chemical weapons enterprise by a founding State Party to the Convention. This is particularly ironic given the publicity Russia had sought, and the praise it had received - including from this delegation - when it declared itself to be free of chemical weapons just a short six months ago.

Mr Chair, I ask that this statement be made an official document of this meeting of the Executive Council and published on the external server and the public website of the OPCW.