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IRELAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR KEVIN KELLY
AMBASSADOR OF IRELAND TO THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS
AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES
PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson, Director-General, distinguished delegates,

Ireland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I will add the following remarks in a national capacity.

The Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force in 1997 as the first disarmament agreement negotiated within a multilateral framework providing for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction under universally applied international control. This was a remarkable diplomatic and legal achievement and a great step in the cause of disarmament, non-proliferation and international peace and security. However, as former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan recognised in 1997, it was much more than this too: the Convention announced “to all succeeding generations that chemical weapons are instruments that no State with any respect for itself and no people with any sense of dignity would use in conflicts, whether domestic or international.”

Today, more than twenty years since the Convention entered into force, the international community is at a critical juncture in the fight to uphold the international norm against chemical weapons use. The marked increase in the use of these weapons in recent years in the Syrian Arab Republic, Malaysia and more recently in Salisbury in the United Kingdom, seriously threatens to undermine the universal prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, as enshrined in the Convention.

Ireland is clear in its condemnation of these attacks and resolute in our calls to hold those who use chemical weapons to account. The use of these weapons is an affront to the international rules-based system on which we all depend for our security and wellbeing. The use of chemical weapons by anybody, anywhere and under any circumstances must be rigorously condemned, and the international community as a whole must enforce the prohibition of chemical weapons use and hold accountable those who are responsible for such abhorrent acts.

It is utterly unacceptable that over a century after their first use, these weapons are still being used to inflict such cruel harm on combatants, civilians, and most devastatingly, on children. The images and footage of innocent children suffering in the aftermath of these attacks



cannot fail to leave a lasting imprint on those who view them. There must be no impunity for such grave violations of international law.

Ireland places its trust in the efforts and work of the OPCW, including the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), the Fact-Finding Mission and the Declaration Assessment Team. We are dismayed that the JIM's mandate has not been renewed by the United Nations Security Council. The repeated use of veto powers in the United Nations Security Council to prevent moves towards accountability for chemical weapons use in the Syrian Arab Republic is highly regrettable. We ask States to consider the negative impact that these vetoes have on our collective ability to ensure accountability for violations of the Convention in the Syrian Arab Republic and elsewhere.

The repeated and flagrant use of chemical weapons in recent years represents a dangerous weakening of the universal norm against their use. Moreover, the failure to ensure effective accountability only serves to embolden those who dare to use them. While we cannot hear the testimony of those whose lives have been cut short through the use of chemical weapons, we can honour their memory by ensuring the perpetrators of these acts are identified and brought to justice.

This meeting provides States Parties with the opportunity to uphold the global ban on chemical weapons use and to clarify the future role of the OPCW in attributing responsibility for these attacks. We commend the United Kingdom's leadership in calling for this meeting and we support the proposed draft decision as presented in document C-SS-4/DEC/CRP.1Rev1.

For Ireland, it is clear that if accountability for the use of these abhorrent weapons is avoided the use of chemical weapons as weapons of war and terror will not be deterred. The first step towards accountability is attribution. It is thus clear that the international community can no longer afford to continue without an attribution mechanism to identify perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons.

Once tasked and appropriately resourced to undertake challenging missions, the OPCW Technical Secretariat can deliver. Ireland places its trust in the integrity and objectivity of the OPCW Technical Secretariat to conduct independent investigations—with support from outside experts where deemed necessary—of alleged uses of chemical weapons. Our ultimate aim must be to facilitate universal attribution of all chemical weapons incidents with a view to preventing impunity and future attacks. Ireland indicates its willingness to support the full implementation of this decision if voted on by the States Parties.

Mr Chairperson, I will conclude my remarks by underlining the need for the international community to overcome differences, unite, and intensify our efforts to set up a mechanism to end impunity for these crimes. Together, we can rid the world of chemical weapons, we can advance the cause of peace and security, and we can build a safer world for all. Wilful defiance of our Convention cannot be allowed to go unchallenged.

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.