



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Fourth Special Session
26 and 27 June 2018

C-SS-4/NAT.26
26 June 2018
ENGLISH only

CZECH REPUBLIC

**STATEMENT BY H.E. IVO SRAMEK
DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC
AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES
PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union. I would like to make a few remarks in our national capacity.

We adopted the Chemical Weapons Convention more than 20 years ago because we, as the international community, came to an agreement that we don't want to see chemical weapons used ever again. The clear purpose was, and still is, and I will now quote from Article VIII of the Convention, "to ensure the implementation of its provisions, including those for international verification of compliance with it, and to provide a forum for consultation and cooperation among States Parties." And the Organisation has been very successful in doing just that, having overseen the destruction of more than 96 percent of the declared stockpiles of chemical weapons and with a clear plan to destroy the remaining weapons in the near future. And I would add that in the OPCW the States Parties always managed to work together on the basis of consensus, which played a crucial role in the success of the Organisation.

However, in the last couple of years, we have unfortunately witnessed the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons in several countries around the world. This is simply unacceptable and the Czech Republic has clearly condemned it on many occasions. The international community swiftly reacted to the repeated use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and agreed to create the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission and the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism. Their purpose was to determine which chemicals were used, when and where the attacks took place, and who was responsible for them. Unfortunately, since late 2017, due to the impasse at the United Nations Security Council, we are missing a critical element of these mechanisms—the identification of those who are responsible for the attacks. This gap threatens to erode the whole system created by the Chemical Weapons Convention because the perpetrators can act freely without the fear of being identified.



How can the OPCW effectively ensure compliance with the norm against chemical weapons when those who resort to using those weapons remain anonymous and absent from our discussions? We must collectively do something about this, and time is of the essence.

Bearing in mind that this Organisation is not an international tribunal where matters of accountability under international law can be decided, what we can do here at this Conference is to strengthen the capacity of the Organisation by mandating it to work on attribution of chemical attacks. That is the only way that the OPCW can, in this new environment created by the repeated use of chemical weapons, continue to fulfil its aforementioned mission “to achieve the object and purpose of this Convention”. This is the reason why the Czech Republic supports the draft decision proposed by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and co-sponsors it. We invite other States Parties to do the same.

I would like to request that this statement be considered an official document of the Conference and be published on the public website of the Organisation.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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