



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

Eighty-Eighth Session  
10 – 12 July 2018

EC-88/NAT.8  
10 July 2018  
ENGLISH only

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR KENNETH D. WARD  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
TO THE OPCW  
AT THE EIGHTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,  
Mr Director-General,  
Distinguished Ambassadors and delegates,

All that is needed for the evil of chemical weapons to endure is for responsible nations to do nothing. On 27 June, responsible nations acknowledged the manifold threats to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the international norm it embodies. On 27 June, responsible nations overwhelmingly endorsed decisive action to counter these threats and to renew their solemn commitment to a world free of chemical weapons. The decision adopted by the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties is a historic milestone, not only for the OPCW, but also for the international community.

The decision condemns the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic in three attacks in 2014-2015, and further condemns the Syrian Arab Republic for the use of the chemical weapon sarin against Khan Shaykhun on 4 April, 2017.

The decision concludes that the Syrian Arab Republic's continued use of chemical weapons establishes that the Assad regime has failed to declare and destroy all of its chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities.

The decision directs the Technical Secretariat to put in place arrangements to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in the Syrian Arab Republic with respect to those incidents where the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) had determined that use or likely use has occurred. In this regard, the decision notes that the FFM has reported further uses of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic for which the perpetrators have not yet been identified—in Ltamenah on 24, 25, and 30 March 2017, and in Saraqib on 4 February 2018.

The decision directs the Technical Secretariat to preserve and provide information to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic as well as any other relevant investigatory entities established under the auspices of the United Nations. The decision condemns the chemical weapons attacks that occurred in Salisbury, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and at Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Malaysia. The decision, with respect to the threat from non-State actors, condemns the so-called Islamic State or “Daesh” for chemical weapons use in Iraq and for two chemical



weapons attacks in 2015-2016 in the Syrian Arab Republic confirmed by the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism. The decision underscores the importance of identifying the perpetrators for any chemical weapons attack and, to that end, authorises the Director-General, if requested by a State Party investigating chemical weapons use on its territory, to provide technical assistance to national investigations with respect to attributing responsibility. And finally, the decision expresses support and appreciation for the professional, impartial and independent work of the Director-General and the Secretariat to achieve the object and purpose of the Convention.

The Conference of the States Parties has spoken in a loud and clear voice. It is essential that this Council and all States Parties recognise the mandate given to the OPCW by the Conference of the States Parties decision, and work together to ensure that it is fully and effectively implemented. As emphasised by the United States Deputy Secretary of State, John Sullivan, “restoring the norm against chemical weapons use is a collective responsibility that calls for collective action.”

I am saddened to note that there are two more victims as a result of exposure to the military-grade nerve agent referred to as a Novichok. This is the same nerve agent used in an assassination attempt in the United Kingdom in March that put three individuals in the hospital and jeopardised the health of many more individuals. This further underscores the condemnation of chemical weapons use and the need for action, as agreed by the special session of the Conference of the States Parties two weeks ago. The United States continues to stand in solidarity with the United Kingdom and stands ready to provide assistance, if requested.

The United States believes the “Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons” is a necessary complement to the special session of the Conference decision and is fully aligned with the goals of the Convention. The Partnership seeks to promote cooperation and information-sharing among its participants, including facilitating national prosecution of those who carry out chemical weapons attacks. It puts such perpetrators on notice that they will face a day of reckoning and their victims will see justice done. To date, 34 States have endorsed the Partnership's declaration of principles. We call upon the community of responsible nations to join in this effort to end impunity for the use of chemical weapons.

The Open-Ended Working Group on the Review Conference, under the able leadership of Ambassador Puja of Indonesia, has made substantial progress in preparing States Parties for the Fourth Review Conference. Thanks to the efforts of the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities of the OPCW, led by Ambassador Sabine Nölke and Ambassador Bruce Koloane, we are well-positioned to address the challenges that the OPCW will face in the years ahead.

The United States is committed to the success of the Fourth Review Conference. We believe the Review Conference provides a timely opportunity to reinforce the work of the Fourth Special Session of the Conference by strengthening the OPCW. The Organisation must better position itself to fulfil its verification functions, to address the threat from non-State actors, and to support the implementation of Article VII, X, and XI through international cooperation and assistance including capacity-building.

The Review Conference also provides an opportunity to finally address the threat posed by central nervous system-acting chemicals, such as the pharmaceutical anaesthetic, fentanyl.

The United States and many other States Parties are seriously concerned that some States may be deliberately developing these chemicals for warfare or for other harmful purposes, by cloaking these efforts as legitimate activities such as law enforcement or medical research. We can no longer turn a blind eye to this threat while claiming to be working toward a world truly free of chemical weapons. As noted by my Australian colleague, Ambassador Mason, tomorrow we will be hosting a side event on this important issue at the lunch break. I invite all delegations to send a representative.

At this session of the Council, we must also bid farewell to our Director-General, His Excellency Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü. He took up his responsibilities as our Director-General in July 2010 and his tenure spans no less than 27 regular sessions of the Executive Council. Under his able leadership, this Organisation faced the challenges of a resurgence in chemical weapons use while never losing sight of the daily business of routine inspections and oversight of the destruction of the declared stockpiles. Over the last eight years, Director-General Üzümcü has distinguished himself and distinguished this extraordinarily enlightened enterprise that is the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We all owe him, and indeed the world owes him, an incalculable debt of gratitude for his dedicated service and unrelenting commitment to a world free of chemical weapons. Let me express our deepest appreciation for your leadership and wish you all the very best in the next chapter of your life.

On 25 July, His Excellency Ambassador Fernando Arias will become the fourth Director-General of the OPCW. Ambassador Arias is a gifted diplomat and a passionate leader—a worthy successor to captain the OPCW. The United States pledges its full support to the incoming Director-General and wishes him every success. His successes, indeed, will be all of our successes.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is a remarkable achievement in the progress of humanity. We all must fight for it and, without exception, expose those who use chemical weapons and hold them accountable. As States Parties, we are entrusted with a solemn responsibility which demands that, in our words and in our actions, we defend and advance the shared vision of a world free of chemical weapons. Silence and inertia only further embolden those who would use chemical weapons to the detriment of all mankind. Let us all go forward, armed with unwavering resolve and the courage of our convictions, and together banish the scourge of chemical weapons to the past.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

I ask that this statement be an official document of the session and posted on both the external server and the public website.

- - - 0 - - -