



OPCW

Executive Council

Eighty-Eighth Session

10 – 12 July 2018

EC-88/NAT.23

10 July 2018

ENGLISH and RUSSIAN only

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**STATEMENT BY G.V. KALAMANOV
DEPUTY MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND TRADE
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
AT THE EIGHTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,

The delegation of the Russian Federation has the honour of once again welcoming you at the helm of the Executive Council and would like to assure you of our full support and willingness to cooperate constructively.

We express our appreciation for Director-General Üzümcü for the effective work carried out by the OPCW Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”), which he oversees, with regard to the verification of the fulfilment by the States Parties of their obligations under the Convention, and specifically in terms of the destruction of the stockpiles of chemical weapons that have accumulated around the world. During the course of his term at the head of the Secretariat, more States joined the ranks of the Convention, including the Syrian Arab Republic, the chemical demilitarisation of which was successfully completed; a number of States completed the destruction of their chemical weapons stockpiles; last year, the Russian Federation completed the early destruction of the stockpile that it inherited from the Cold War over the last century. All of these are major milestones in the development and universalisation of the Convention. For these successes, the Organisation was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013. It would very much be a shame if this successful period changed gears toward the decline of the OPCW in light of recent events, which can be described as deepening the divide within the Organisation. The task to set straight this dangerous trend lies on the shoulders of the new Director-General, Ambassador Arias; we wish him success in his work.

Two weeks ago, the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter “the Conference”) was closed after a vote was held and the decision was taken to grant to the Secretariat the incongruous authority to assign attribution for the use of chemical weapons. I would once again emphasise: we categorically disagree with this decision, and we find it to be illegitimate. This is why, together with 23 States Parties, we voted against it.

We recall that the object and purpose of the Convention are defined as the renouncement of developing, producing, acquiring, accumulating, stockpiling, and using chemical weapons, as well as encouraging or inciting another party to engage in said activities. Article I includes an exhaustive (!) list of the obligations that must be fulfilled, by carrying out a number of deeply



technical measures aimed at the physical destruction of chemical weapons and the facilities used to store and produce them, as well as not using riot control agents as chemical warfare agents. For the purposes of implementation, the OPCW has been assigned the strictly practical task of providing States Parties with technical and expert assistance, including verification procedures. There is no and cannot be any other interpretation of the objectives and tasks of the OPCW!

In this regard, the legal substantiation for the initiative to assign an “attribution” function to the Organisation, as submitted by Great Britain, one of its authors, is laughable. Our British colleagues refer to paragraph 26 of¹ the Verification Annex to the Convention, which addressees the collection of information “[...] that might serve to identify the origin of any chemical weapons used [...]”. The meaning of this purely technical provision is not who used chemical weapons, as is being suggested to us, but where it came from, i.e., how it got to the site of the incident and who produced it. It is these provisions that the Russian side has always held in mind when addressing the need to improve the work of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria. According to the logic used by the representatives of Great Britain, if a munition is marked with “made in the UK”, then the responsibility for the use of any weapons, including firearms found by ISIS—and there are plenty of such examples—should lie with the producer State, i.e., Great Britain. But this is completely absurd!

The authors of this decision have engaged in blatant fraud with this shameless overriding of the objectives and tasks of the Convention. They’ve used back-alley methods to pressure many delegations to the OPCW from 82 countries to vote for this document, and now they will try to push their pernicious posture on the remaining conscientious States Parties to the Convention.

We would recall that the Convention does not contain any provisions stipulating the possibility of establishing a special mechanism of attribution for the use of chemical weapons. The OPCW is not authorised to “assign attribution” for violations of the Convention. We proceed from the fact that assigning the Secretariat this type of authority without stripping the text of the Convention and entering amendments to it in line with the procedures set out in Article XV of the Convention is, by definition, impossible.

Russia will never recognise any decisions to turn the OPCW, a strictly technical organisation that is not part of the United Nations system, into an agency that identifies the perpetrators of incidents involving chemical weapons. The existence of such a mandate would mean the imposition of sanctions against a specific State, which is the exclusive prerogative of the United Nations Security Council. Moreover, we place special attention on the fact that implementing this decision would ultimately mean that the Director-General is essentially authorised to single-handedly apportion blame, including to United Nations Member States. At the same time, no controls have been prescribed for the OPCW States Parties or the Council.

We assert that Russia has no obligation to implement the decision taken at the Conference, nor do any of the other States that ratified the Convention based on the interpretation according to which it was made available for signature! We will try to change the situation.

¹ Translator’s Note: This quote is from paragraph 26 of Part XI of the Verification Annex.

This matter should be considered by the Conference of the States Parties. But if the situation cannot be changed, then I believe that the days are numbered for the OPCW; at the very least, it will cease to be the international organisation that it is today.

We are forced to state that the decision adopted by the Conference is one element of the generally negative trend in terms of the OPCW's investigations into incidents of the use of chemical weapons. The FFM demonstratively refused to follow the standards of the Convention, violating basic regulatory requirements. The investigations are conducted remotely, in a non-transparent manner when it comes to keeping the States Parties to the Convention informed, and in violation of the "chain of custody" procedures for the collection and safekeeping of material evidence, based on the Mission's latest reports on the events in Khan Shaykhun, Ltamenah, and Saraqib. And this is exactly why we requested, during the approval of the session's agenda, to consider holding a closed briefing on the FFM's work.

We have studied the interim report on the investigation of the very high-profile incident that took place in the Syrian town of Douma on 7 April 2018. We have a number of questions for its authors.

In particular, the report addresses security problems due to which the FFM could not enter Douma for a week. It mentions an incident where the advance team was fired at by rebels. We remember when representatives of Western countries were passing around the theory that it was the Russians who were hindering the Mission by not ensuring the due level of security. At the same time, for some reason the report did not include anything about the missile strike by the Western "troika" on the night of 13 and 14 April, which completely blocked OPCW experts from beginning their work in Syria—if there had been the slightest bit more, their missiles would have shut down the OPCW Mission altogether.

There is nothing in the report about the briefing that was held on 26 April at the OPCW Headquarters, which was attended by witnesses of the fraudulent video of the well-known "White Helmets" NGO. We would recall that the statement by the Western Group on the eve of this briefing asserted that Russia was interfering in the work of the FFM by appropriating a number of vital witnesses and dumping them in The Hague. Nothing of the sort! To the contrary: even before the briefing, seven individuals from that group had already been questioned by the FFM. The remainder were also prepared to give statements. However, there is nary a word about these witnesses in the report.

We believe that the FFM will draw the proper conclusions and will be able to complete its investigation in line with the requirements of the Convention.

There is plenty of room on the OPCW agenda to continue with the so-called Syrian chemical dossier. In spite of unprecedented pressure from a number of States Parties and the less-than-subtle partisanship of the Secretariat in these matters, the Syrian side continues to act in a spirit of good faith and to cooperate with the OPCW in order to resolve all remaining issues.

The situation concerning Syria's implementation of the decision of the Eighty-Third Session of the Council on the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic² is very telling. In spite of the known

² Translator's Note: EC-83/DEC.5

circumstances related to said decision—its politically motivated nature, as well as the complex security situation—Syria has conducted two inspections of the Scientific Research Centre in Barzah and Jamrayah (SSRC). These were completed and confirmed that no activities prohibited by the Convention took place there. Nevertheless, the “troika” of States—the United States, Great Britain, and France—razed to the ground the SSRC location in Barzah. Now there is nothing to inspect in Barzah. And it is against this backdrop that the report of the Secretariat emerges on continued implementation of that decision. Can that truly be considered a normal approach?

We are convinced that future work on the Syrian issue should be technical in nature and be conducted on a pragmatic and depoliticised basis. With regard to Syria’s initial declaration, according to the Convention, it is necessary to continue with meticulous expert work. All of these problems can be resolved over time. For those who love to criticise the Syrians on the incompleteness and inaccuracy of the initial declaration, we recall that it was prepared in extreme conditions of a battle against international terrorism. At that time, the Syrian Government had control of no more than 50 per cent of its territory. It is necessary to stop setting conditions that are clearly impossible to meet and that go beyond the framework of the requirements of the Convention. It is necessary, finally, that all participants in this process, including the Council, demonstrate their political will and start to take issues off of the DAT’s agenda when discussions of said issues have been exhausted. This is the only way we can restore trust and put a stop to the future degradation of the Organisation. This is the only approach that can lead to the universality of the Convention and accession to it by the States that have not yet done so.

Four months after the incident in Salisbury, in which Russian citizens Yulia and Sergei Skripal suffered, the situation surrounding the investigation has not become any clearer. Great Britain’s refusal to cooperate with the Russian Federation in conducting a joint investigation, the refusal to allow Russian diplomatic representatives access to our citizens in disregard for all diplomatic and consular protocol, and the endless attempts by Great Britain to manipulate the findings of the OPCW are undermining confidence in London’s vociferous assertions.

The investigation of the incident in Salisbury is far from complete, and it has only just begun in Amesbury. The death of a person is always a tragedy. We express our condolences to the family and loved ones of Dawn Sturgess, a citizen of Great Britain, whose death took place under strange circumstances. For this very reason we believe that now is not the time to spin this tragedy for political purposes. Yet instead, the authorities of Great Britain are again pointedly hinting at a certain nerve agent with some connection to the Convention. One must remember that narcotics also fall into the category of nerve agents.

And again, as in the situation with the Skripals, instead of concrete information we are hearing only demands. In particular, how are we to understand the words of the head of the MFA Mr Javid, who said that “the time has come for the Russian authorities to explain exactly what has gone on”? And how exactly can Russia explain what has gone on in a faraway country if the British themselves cannot say anything intelligible about it?

It would seem that the time has come for the authorities of Great Britain themselves to finally clearly explain what work is being carried out at the Porton Down laboratory—a centre of defence against chemical weapons where, in fact, the very same toxic chemical that is defined

as part of a group of new nerve agents researched in Western countries under the name “Novichok” was produced. Great Britain needs to explain to the OPCW why toxic substances are “floating around” their country.

Twenty years have passed since the Convention came into force. But one of the main objectives of the Convention has yet to be achieved: the complete destruction of chemical weapons. Today, the only possessor State with chemical stockpiles left is the United States, which, despite sufficient financial, material, human, and technological resources, is in no hurry to fulfil its main obligation under the Convention. We call upon the United States to weigh its ability to complete the destruction of its chemical arsenal as quickly as possible and to follow our example by doing it as soon as possible. The American side has everything at its disposal to do so.

We believe it is necessary that Japan activate its efforts to accelerate the destruction of the chemical weapons abandoned on China’s territory during World War II.

We welcome the readiness of Libya to facilitate a visit from OPCW experts at the site of the former Ruwagha chemical weapons storage facility. We see in that a demonstration of the will to responsibly fulfil their obligations under the Convention. But to a lesser degree, the inspection of Ruwagha using remote methods seems strange. Why is the Organisation insisting on this dubious verification mechanism? It is necessary, in line with the instructions of the Eighty-Third Session of the Executive Council, that the Secretariat conduct a comprehensive inspection of the facility, with a direct visit to the site and the collection of the requisite samples, especially since Libya is prepared to provide any assistance as needed.

A few words about other issues. We welcome the results of the Conference on Countering Chemical Terrorism that was held on 7 and 8 June in The Hague. We are convinced of the need for concrete work by the OPCW in this area. At the same time, we would emphasise that our Organisation is not anti-terrorist in nature and its abilities in that area are considerably limited—this is also clear based on the results of the Conference.

The present situation points to the relevance of the Russian initiative to develop an International Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Chemical and Biological Terrorism. We believe that the OPCW could also play a key role in making this happen.

We are reaching the key stage in preparations for the Fourth Review Conference of the States Parties. The Open-Ended Working Group facilitated by Mr Puja of Indonesia has held numerous meetings. Interesting discussions were held and a great many different views were expressed on the vision of the future of the OPCW and its future priorities. We believe that by the end of the year, we will be able to develop general approaches that can be applied with consensus-based support.

The situation concerning the decision-making process at the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties shone light upon the flaws of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference. The end result is that pivotal decisions can be made by a minority of the States Parties of the Organisation. We believe that as part of the Review process, it would be wise to enter amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Conference to eliminate these flaws.

In line with the instructions of the Director-General as per the proposal of the Russian Federation, we welcome the Scientific Advisory Board's (SAB) work assessing new types of nerve agents. We expect that Russia's observations on this matter, which were submitted to the SAB, will be duly taken into account.

On other issues, the Russian delegation will express its comments during discussions on the relevant agenda items at this session.

Madam Chairperson,

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Eighty-Eighth Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW and published on the Organisation's external website.

- - - 0 - - -