



**OPCW**

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**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-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson, Mr. Director-General, distinguished ambassadors and delegates,

I would like to start by welcoming His Excellency Ambassador Fernando Arias to his first Executive Council meeting in the role of Director-General. Ambassador Arias is a gifted leader and the United States offers him our full support as he works with States Parties to address the range of challenges facing the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). As we are all aware, there is no shortage of challenges requiring our urgent attention.

During the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties (CSP), responsible nations overwhelmingly condemned the use of chemical weapons worldwide and endorsed strengthening the OPCW's tools to respond to such use. This Organisation has much to do to implement the decision adopted in June. It is essential that this Council and all States Parties support the mandate given to the OPCW by the CSP decision and work together to ensure that it is fully and effectively implemented. The United States welcomes the efforts of the Director-General and Technical Secretariat to put in place arrangements to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons use in Syria.

Madam Chairperson,

We understand that Turkey and Russia have taken steps to avert a military offensive by the Assad regime and its allies against Idlib, Syria. We hope the de-escalation is made permanent. The United States welcomes any sincere effort to reduce the violence in Syria and to prevent further use of chemical weapons.

The OPCW cannot ignore the repeated use of chemical weapons during the course of the Syrian civil war. All instances of use or likely use confirmed by the Fact-Finding Mission must be attributed, and those perpetrating such use must be held accountable. The attribution arrangements of temporary duration, required by paragraph 10 of the June CSP decision, are an essential step towards realising this goal. We are confident that the plans put forth by the Director-General will assemble the required expertise to fulfil the attribution mandate, while not adding to the OPCW's long-term staffing and cost structure.

We continue to support a zero nominal growth budget for the OPCW. Nevertheless, we are clear-eyed that the continued use of chemical weapons imposes further requirements on the



OPCW and necessitates further action by States Parties. In order to adequately respond to increased demands, the OPCW will require special funding for an upgraded laboratory, improved security measures, and the implementation of additional functions. The United States assessed contribution is nearly 22 percent of the OPCW's regular operating budget – over \$14 million. The United States has also made sizeable contributions to various OPCW trust funds and will continue to look at where we can provide additional voluntary contributions. The United States urges others to do the same. We need to fund the important, immediate work of this Organisation without permanently raising its operating budget.

The United States fully supports the Technical Secretariat in taking on its role to attribute chemical weapons use in Syria. We concur that this effort will entail modest additional resources over the next several years; however, the United States cannot agree to deviate permanently from zero nominal growth. Similar to the position taken related to the Syrian accession to the Convention, the United States can support a modest increase in the 2019 program and budget for the next three years to account for the attribution effort in Syria. We would expect to see a corresponding decrease in the 2022 budget to revert to zero nominal growth, with the 2018 funding level serving as a baseline.

Madam Chairperson,

The goal of the Chemical Weapons Convention is the complete elimination of the world's stockpile of chemical weapons. The United States firmly believes in this end state and envisions the day when our goal for a world free of chemical weapons is realised. Unfortunately, that day is not yet here. As a result of the continued and flagrant violation of the Convention by some, and the increased threat of chemical weapons use worldwide, the OPCW finds itself under considerable strain and requiring additional financial resources to fully execute its mission.

The increased frequency of chemical weapons use that we are witnessing is a crisis for the OPCW. This crisis prompted States Parties to call for an emergency session of the Conference of the States Parties in June in order to respond. As alarming as the trend is, we must not accept it as the steady state. Our emergency response must be just that – a contingency – not a permanent addition to the Organisation's structure and costs.

Madam Chairperson,

Since this Council last met in July, the Technical Secretariat deployed to assist in yet another Technical Assistance Visit (TAV) to the United Kingdom after two additional victims fell ill due to exposure to a chemical weapon, later determined by United Kingdom authorities to be a Novichok. Sadly, as was noted in our last session, Dawn Sturgess died as a result of her exposure to this military-grade nerve agent – the same chemical weapon used in Salisbury in the attempted assassination of Sergei Skripal in March.

The Technical Assistance Visit report issued by the OPCW on September 4 confirmed the United Kingdom's findings related to the identity of the toxic chemical that affected the two individuals in Amesbury. Furthermore, the OPCW assessment found that the toxic compound had a concentration of 97-98 percent and was a neat agent of "high purity."

On September 5, the UK announced it had concluded its investigation into the Salisbury attack, ascertained the responsible individuals, and would bring a number of charges against

two Russian nationals including conspiracy to murder, attempted murder, and the use and possession of a Novichok. Further, the UK authorities determined that the two Russian nationals responsible are officers from the Russian military intelligence service, also known as the GRU.

The United States stands in solidarity with the United Kingdom in its efforts to bring to justice these individuals for the brazen use of a chemical weapon on UK soil. We also commend the work of UK services in identifying Russian GRU agents involved. As our Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Haley has often stated, “No one should think they can use chemical weapons and get away with it.”

Madam Chairperson,

While the upcoming Review Conference should be a positive moment, where we acknowledge that *declared* stockpiles are at their lowest levels since the Convention’s entry into force, we must also be mindful and seriously concerned with stockpiles of chemical weapons which have not been declared by some States Parties.

In the wake of the Technical Secretariat’s TAV reports and the criminal charges announced by the United Kingdom in September, no one should have any doubt whatsoever that Russia is responsible for the Novichok assassination attempt in Salisbury that endangered thousands of citizens, left four individuals hospitalised fighting for their lives, and ultimately claimed the life of another.

While Russia has eliminated its *declared* chemical weapons stockpile, the use of this nerve agent in Salisbury demonstrates that Russia clearly has not met its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and still maintains a chemical weapons program. Russia’s contempt for the international norm against chemical weapons use must stop. The United States calls on Russia to join the civilised nations of the world by fully declaring and eliminating its chemical weapons program, including its Novichoks.

Russia is not the only State Party that has not declared all of its chemical weapons. In the Special CSP decision adopted in June, the Conference acknowledged that the confirmed use of chemical weapons by Syria, by direct implication, establishes that the Syrian government has failed to declare and destroy all of its chemical weapons and associated chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs). The Conference demanded that Syria declare all of the chemical weapons it possesses, including sarin and its precursors, as well as its CWPFs.

Madam Chairperson,

Over the past months, the Open-Ended Working Group on the Review Conference has made substantial progress in preparing States Parties for the upcoming Fourth Review Conference (RevCon). The United States is committed to the success of the Fourth RevCon and the Conference of the States Parties next month, both of which provide a timely opportunity to reinforce the work of the Fourth Special Session of the CSP on strengthening the OPCW. We welcome the Chairman’s informal text that has been circulated, as it lays out many of the important priorities that need to be addressed during the RevCon. 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 RevCon will also provide an opportunity to address the critical threat posed by central nervous system acting chemicals, such as the pharmaceutical anesthetic fentanyl. The United States and many other States Parties are seriously concerned that some States may be developing these chemicals for warfare and other harmful purposes, while cloaking their efforts as legitimate activities such as law enforcement or medical research. This Organisation's efforts working toward a world free of chemical weapons demand that we adapt and address new and emerging threats, such as those posed by central nervous system acting chemicals and the military-grade nerve agent used in the United Kingdom.

Madam Chairperson,

As we approach our Review Conference, we are facing an historic time for the Chemical Weapons Convention. Since our last RevCon, we have seen the repeated use of chemical weapons on multiple continents and a concomitant erosion of the international norms against such use. Regrettably, we have lost ground in our efforts to achieve a world free of chemical weapons. Nonetheless, the OPCW and the shared commitment of almost all of its States Parties remains a powerful force; together we can counter the resurgence of chemical weapons use and eventually succeed in consigning these heinous weapons to the past.

To achieve this goal, we must address new chemical weapons threats. To this end, the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands will submit jointly to the Director-General a technical proposal to update the Annex on Chemicals in accordance with Convention Article XV, paragraph 5. This proposal is being made to ensure that the Chemical Weapons Convention specifically and concretely addresses the type of chemical warfare agent used in Salisbury and identified by the Scientific Advisory Board in its recent report. This agent and its associated families have no known use for purposes not prohibited by the Chemical Weapons Convention and should be listed as Schedule 1 chemical families. The United States will provide additional details under the appropriate agenda item in closed session. Taking this action will ensure the Convention remains robust and responsive to current threats.

Madam Chairperson,

This year we find ourselves mourning the loss of life that has occurred due to weapons that all in this room had pledged to eliminate and never to use. Responsible nations are striving to respond to this distressing turn of events. The decision adopted at the Fourth Special CSP is an historic milestone and will help bolster the OPCW with additional tools to respond to this crisis. States Parties are working to hold those who use chemical weapons accountable and are countering new threats every day – in this Organisation, in the United Nations, and through initiatives such as the Partnership against the Impunity for the use of Chemical Weapons. We will not stand idly by and allow a few malevolent actors to turn back the clock and undo the remarkable achievements of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We are undaunted and will continue to work tirelessly towards a world free of chemical weapons.

Madam Chairperson,

In closing, I must briefly address the incident publicly announced on October 4. The Dutch Government in a detailed and compelling briefing revealed it had disrupted a GRU cyber operation underway on Friday April 13 of this year which targeted the OPCW – the very building we meet in today. The Dutch Government reported that Russian intelligence

officers had moved close to this building and were making preparations to hack into OPCW computer networks. To protect the integrity of the OPCW, Dutch authorities pre-empted the GRU cyber operation and escorted the Russian intelligence officers out of the Netherlands. The United States applauds the successful efforts of the Dutch Government to detect and disrupt the planned cyber-attack. We also thank the Dutch and United Kingdom Governments for exposing that this blatant operation was but a small part of a global cyber campaign being waged by Russian intelligence.

For our part, U.S. authorities on October 4 indicted seven Russian GRU officers in connection with a broad campaign of criminal cyber operations by the Russian government. Four of the seven indicted GRU officers took part in Russia's planned cyber-attack against the OPCW.

Later in this session of the Executive Council, I intend to address in greater detail Russia's brazen cyber-attack and its implications for the OPCW.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

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

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