

**Alicia Sanders-Zakre
Arms Control Association
Washington, D.C., USA**

**Statement to the 4th Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention
Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
The Hague, The Netherlands, 21-30 November 2018**

Mr. Chairman, Director-General, Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Chemical Weapons Convention regime has accomplished much in the past two decades to eliminate chemical weapons and reinforce the decades-long norm against their use.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has verified the destruction of more than 96% of declared chemical weapons stockpiles; only a portion of the U.S. declared arsenal remains to be neutralized. From 2013-2016, the OPCW oversaw an impressive and unprecedented multilateral effort in Syria to remove and destroy over 1,300 metric tons of chemical weapons in an active conflict zone.

And yet, the delegates here face serious challenges to the CWC and the global norm against the use and possession of chemical weapons. Tackling those challenges requires a renewed spirit of cooperation, a reaffirmation of the CWC, and compliance with the treaty by all states-parties and stakeholders.

Four countries – Egypt, Israel, North Korea and South Sudan - still need to join the Convention in order to achieve universality. Amongst States-Parties, there are concerns about the completeness and correctness of declarations to the OPCW, making the work of the Declaration Assessment Team to resolve the inconsistencies and gaps in Syria's declaration of paramount importance.

The United States also needs to complete the destruction of its remaining prohibited chemical stockpiles no later than the adjusted destruction deadline of 2023 in a manner consistent with applicable environmental and safety standards.

But the greatest immediate threat posed to the CWC regime is undoubtedly the appalling use of chemical weapons. The Syrian people have been plagued by hundreds of devastating chemical weapons attacks since the start of the brutal civil war in their country.

The Fact-Finding Mission's independent investigations into alleged instances of chemical weapons use have been invaluable. Before a state-party blocked the extension of its mandate, the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) attributed responsibility for six attacks.¹ The total numbers are likely much higher.

¹In 2016, the JIM reported that the Syrian government was responsible for chemical weapons attacks in Talmenes in April 2014, and in Sarmin and in Idlib province in March 2015. and found that the Islamic State was responsible for an attack using sulfur mustard in Marea in August 2015. In 2017, the JIM concluded that the Syrian government used Sarin in an April 4, 2017 attack in Khan Shaykhun, and that the Islamic State extremist group was responsible for using sulfur mustard on September 15 and 16, 2016 in Um-Housh, Syria.

Since the last review conference, another CWC state-party has violated its obligations under the convention by using the nerve agent Novichok to poison Yulia and Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom in March. This state-party's blatant disregard for its obligation not to possess or use chemical weapons, as well as its reported attempt to hack into the OPCW in April, should be unequivocally condemned.

In light of recent events, we welcome the push by Canada, the United States and the Netherlands, to add Novichok to Schedule 1 listed chemicals in the CWC to ensure the treaty remains robust and adaptive to current threats.

Mr. Chairman,

With the failure to extend the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism in November 2017, the international community lost a fundamental tool to independently assess cases of chemical weapons use, which is essential to efforts to hold those responsible to account.

As the international community struggled to develop another method to investigate and identify chemical weapons users, the French-led International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons played an important role to help share information between governments and to "name and shame" those involved in chemical weapons attacks.

We applaud the decision last June by States-Parties to allow the Director-General to investigate and identify the perpetrators of chemical attacks.

As Director-General Arias said in an interview in September: "Those responsible [for chemical weapons attacks] should now have nowhere to hide and should be held accountable by the international community for breaking the global norm against chemical weapons."

We fully agree. The Arms Control Association encourages the Director-General to establish a mechanism to take forward the attribution mandate as soon as possible. This conference should see that the mechanism is adequately funded and supported.

Achieving universalization and full compliance with the obligations of the CWC is in the interest of all States-Parties. The regime is the product of international cooperation and can only survive with greater partnership amongst states parties.

Thank you for your attention. I would like to request that this statement be made part of the final Review Conference record and posted on the OPCW website.