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AUSTRALIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MATTHEW NEUHAUS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,

I have the distinct honour of addressing the Executive Council for the first time. I look forward to working closely with you, with the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat, and with all States Parties, to further strengthen the Chemical Weapons Convention and our shared undertaking to prevent the use of any chemical weapons.

I would like to assure the OPCW of Australia's own on-going strong commitment and support for the OPCW and its work, in particular, its thorough, comprehensive and impartial investigations of alleged use of chemical weapons.

Madam Chairperson, Australia condemns the cyber operations attributed to Russia against the OPCW. I highlight the statements of our Foreign Minister of 4 and 5 October.

Such actions by an OPCW Member State - and a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council – undermine global integrity and trust in the arms control and verification framework, which plays a critical role in promoting and assuring the global prohibition against any use of chemical weapons.

Undermining the agreed arms control framework is a direct affront to the security interests of all OPCW members.

Australia welcomes the public approach of the United Kingdom and Dutch authorities in calling out and ensuring malicious activity in cyberspace cannot occur with impunity.

Australia would like to express its strong support for Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat in their efforts to strengthen the OPCW's physical and cyber security. The announcements of last week highlight the need to ensure that the Organisation is given the resources and the funding needed to undertake its work in a professional and independent way.

Madam Chairperson, Australia remains deeply concerned at further violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We must do more to defend this key international norm.



Australia would like to thank the Director-General and Technical Secretariat for their work to date to implement the decision of the June Special Session, taken in full compliance with the OPCW's rules and procedures.

We look forward to receiving at the Conference of States Parties in November the Director-General's proposals for how to develop a universal attribution capacity to be able to identify perpetrators of any use of chemical weapons.

Such mechanisms send a clear message – that users of chemical weapons will be held to account, and that they cannot violate their obligations with impunity. Identifying perpetrators is a crucial, necessary step, including if we are to be able to deter others who might consider using such reprehensible weapons.

Australia looks forward to continuing to work with the Secretariat as implementation continues. We call on all States Parties to support the OPCW in these endeavours.

As a key advocate of the June Special Session decision, Australia supports an increase to the OPCW budget to support these new roles.

Adequate funding should be provided, including to support capital investment for high risk areas to improve cyber and physical security.

We hope that States Parties can work together to reach agreement over the budget so that the OPCW is able to carry out its important role.

Madam Chairperson, as we all know, this is a significant year for the OPCW as we prepare for the Conference of States Parties, and the Fourth Review Conference in November.

We look forward to all members states attending the November meetings.

Australia will work constructively with the OPCW and all delegations as we reflect on the OPCW's achievements, and challenges, and consider what shape this Organisation should take in future years.

I note, in particular, the excellent work of my distinguished colleague from Indonesia, Ambassador Puja, for his ongoing work chairing the Open-Ended Working Group on Preparations for the Fourth Review Conference this year.

And I wish Ambassador Gomez all the best for his chairing of the Review Conference.

The Review Conference is an opportunity for us to look to the future and to ask what we can do to ensure the OPCW has a clear mandate to carry out the work necessary to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

One of the challenges our Organisation faces is keeping pace with new and emerging uses of chemicals for hostile purposes.

It is for this reason that Australia supports the recommendation to launch discussions on central nervous system-acting chemicals within the policy making organs of the OPCW.

We would like to see this reflected in the report of the Fourth Review Conference, and call on States Parties to support this initiative.

Madam Chairperson, I thank you.

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