

STATEMENT BY NICOLA STEWART, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE OPCW AT THE SIXTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (EC-M-63)

Thank you Madame Chair,

The UK has carefully reviewed the proposal to update the Schedules put forward by the Russian Federation. We welcome the briefings held by the Technical Secretariat and Russia in recent weeks and we are always willing to discuss options for strengthening the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The UK commends the detailed and considered review of the proposal by the Technical Secretariat. The UK authorities have drawn very similar conclusions to those arrived at by the TS experts.

We were all here just a few weeks ago when this Council unanimously recommended the adoption of the joint proposal put forward by the United States, Canada and the Netherlands.

That proposal was formulated as a direct response to the tragic events in Salisbury and Amesbury which began almost exactly one year ago. It was designed to specifically address the chemical weapon used in that attack and the families of toxic chemicals most closely related to it.

The first two elements of the Russian proposal covers a small subset of the chemicals in the joint proposal. We have not had a clear explanation of why this Council is being asked to look at the same issue again, something which appears to be unnecessarily duplicative.

However, given the fact that the structures are the same as some of those in the joint proposal we have no substantive objection to their inclusion. We would note that Russia's groups one and two are very narrowly defined. If adopted as they stand we would risk creating loopholes by not listing all the closely related and highly toxic analogues of the chemical weapon used in Salisbury.

Ever since the Salisbury incident the UK has prioritised sharing information with States Parties on our investigation whilst ensuring that we do not proliferate knowledge to non-state actors about the exact nature of the nerve agent involved. This should be a priority for all States Parties. Unprotected national papers, including details in this proposal, which actively disseminate such knowledge are a matter of concern to us.

Having carefully considered the rest of the proposal we concur with the TS analysis regarding groups three and four and are able to support these, whilst noting that group four is entirely unrelated to the toxic chemical used in Salisbury

Group five is not connected to the toxic chemical used in Salisbury either despite some public commentary linking it to Novichoks. The analysis by the TS concludes that these chemicals do not meet the criteria for inclusion in Schedule 1. The UK fully shares this assessment.

The criteria set out in the Guidelines were agreed by consensus during the negotiation of the Convention. It is essential for industry and other stakeholders that these criteria are applied correctly and consistently. The UK is therefore unable to support the draft Decision in front of us today whilst it includes group five. We do not have a fundamental problem with the rest of it.

In recent weeks the UK, along with many others, have clearly signalled our concern with the inclusion of group five in this package of proposals. We would also need to see some changes to the preambular paragraphs but a consensus outcome in relation to groups one to four should be fully achievable if the Russian Federation is willing to explore it.

Thank you Madam Chair