



NEW ZEALAND

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LYNDAL WALKER PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW

AT THE NINETIETH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

12 March 2019

Thank you, Chair.

In 1997, the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force, and states parties shared their determination for the sake of mankind, to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons.

Any use of chemical weapons is highly repugnant and in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and other relevant international law. We therefore note with concern the conclusion of the Fact Finding Mission's report, released 1 March, that there are reasonable grounds to conclude that the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon occurred in Douma on 7 April 2018, and that the toxic chemical was likely molecular chlorine.

As we have stated on numerous occasions, New Zealand has full confidence in the conclusions of the Fact Finding Mission, which continues to conduct itself with the utmost independence and professionalism.

New Zealand will continue to condemn all uses of chemical weapons, by anyone, at any time, under any circumstances, and seek accountability for those who use them.

In this regard, we welcome the appointment of Mr Santiago Oñate Laborde as Head of the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) established following the decision of the Conference of the States Parties last year. We are confident that, under Mr Oñate's able leadership, the IIT will be able to pick up where the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism left off – and will fully and effectively deliver on its mandate of identifying those responsible for the heinous use of chemical weapons in Syria.

New Zealand is a strong supporter of the OPCW's work in Syria. To this end, New Zealand is pleased to announce a financial contribution of NZD\$100,000 towards the OPCW's Trust Fund for Syria Missions, and in particular, support of the Investigation and Identification Team.

We thank the OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team for its recent briefing to State Parties on the DAT's ongoing efforts to resolve the outstanding issues relating to Syria's declaration. We note with concern, however, the DAT's confirmation that there remain over 20 serious issues that still need to be resolved. We reiterate that the Syrian Government must cooperate fully, and in good faith, with the Technical Secretariat in order to finally and effectively resolve the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies identified in its declaration. The Syrian Government must urgently comply with the commitments it made when it signed up to this Convention.

I ask that this statement be treated as an official document of this meeting.