



STATEMENT OF CANADA TO THE 91st SESSION OF THE OPCW EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

DELIVERED BY H.E. SABINE NÖLKE, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

Distinguished Chair,

Please accept my congratulations on your new role as Chair of the Executive Council, and assure you of Canada's full support and cooperation under your leadership. You take on this role during what we all acknowledge to be a challenging time in the OPCW.

Recent developments have highlighted the difficulties we face as States Parties committed to stopping the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

Canada is deeply concerned by recent reports of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) that Syrian authorities have removed and destroyed equipment and munitions that the DAT had requested be preserved for further assessment. Samples of a chemical detected at Barzah were identified by two separate designated labs as a likely by-product of a Schedule 1 chemical. This adds to the growing evidence of deliberately false declarations by Syria, destruction of possible evidence, and the alarming likelihood that Syria continues to possess Schedule 1 chemicals. Continued possession of these chemicals by Syria lends additional credence to existing allegations of their use by the regime.

Beyond the submission of an incomplete or untrue declaration, the Syria continues to obfuscate and present obstacles to undermine the work States Parties have instructed the OPCW to carry out. Syrian authorities have refused to issue a visa to the Coordinator of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to enter the country as a member of a delegation from the Technical Secretariat. This violates Article VII, paragraph 7 of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which obliges each State Party to "cooperate with the Organization in the exercise of its functions and in particular to provide assistance to the Technical Secretariat". We urge Syria to fulfill its obligations under the Convention.

Mr. Chair, Canada notes with satisfaction that the IIT is now fully formed and is well into its work. We are confident that the IIT, will be able to assess in an unbiased, impartial manner which parties are responsible for chemical weapons use in Syria. The years may be passing, but as slow as the rule of law may be, no one should be under the illusion that the passage of time will weaken the desire for accountability. There is no waiting it out; those responsible will be identified and brought to justice. We call upon the Syrian Arab Republic to give the IIT full access to the sites, people, documents, and materials that they require to make their assessment.

The Director General informed the States Parties on April 28th that an OPCW internal engineering report, produced as part of the work of the Fact-Finding Mission on Douma, had been leaked to actors outside the organisation. The FFM considered the report in question along with all available information it examined, weighed and deliberated on. Based on the overall facts and evidence collected and analysed, the FFM found that there are reasonable grounds to conclude that molecular chlorine was used as a weapon in Douma. Since the leaked engineering report also addressed attribution questions outside the mandate of the FFM, the DG asked that it also be transferred to the IIT for consideration in its ongoing work. Canada remains steadfast in its confidence in the professionalism and integrity of the FFM and its methods.

However, Mr. Chair, we are unsettled with the leak of official confidential documents from the Technical Secretariat. The DG has indicated that an investigation is underway to determine how the breach occurred and to ensure that it does not happen in the future. We are all aware that there have



been serious attempts to compromise the information security and confidential material held by the Technical Secretariat, including by States Parties in this room. The Organisation, its current and past staff, and States Parties are all bound by the OPCW's Policy on Confidentiality and have a responsibility and an interest in preserving internal information. We support the DG for his management of this issue.

In a similar vein, we are watching with concern a growing coordinated effort to undermine this organisation. We have seen efforts from a number of actors to conduct smear campaigns against individuals in the TS, circulate false information and attempt to discredit the OPCW as an institution. Canada, like most of us here, is bound by facts, evidence-based decision-making and the rule of law. We will not be distracted by efforts to draw attention away from the use of chemical weapons, or the use of non-facts and non-science to call into question the scientific evidence and investigation into these crimes. We will continue to call out disinformation where we see it, and to counter it with the facts and the truth, which underpin rules-based international order.

Mr. Chair, since the last Executive Council session, the Russian Federation issued a formal objection to the Joint Technical Change Proposal put forward by Canada, the Netherlands, and the United States of America. Now that the recommendation has been opposed, Article XV is clear that a decision on the proposal falls to the next Conference of States Parties. We remain hopeful that the Conference of States Parties this November can reach consensus on adding these new chemicals to Schedule 1A.

Mr. Chair, Canada has long supported the work of the OPCW, not only with words, but with concrete action and resources. To date, we have provided more than Can\$27M to mitigate and respond to the use of chemical weapons in Syria, including supporting the destruction of Syria's declared stockpile and the investigation into continued use. Our latest contribution of Can\$2M in March 2019 is supporting the work of the IIT and the OPCW's efforts to enhance cyber security and other security infrastructure capabilities. This includes increasing field mobility, enhancing the Organisation's 24/7 Situational Centre, and provision of related training and equipment.

The new Centre for Chemistry and Technology remains a priority for us. I continue to work with Ambassador Puja of Indonesia as co-chair of the Group of Friends of the Lab to ensure that this new facility will be the venue for capacity building that serves the needs of all States Parties. We are encouraged by the large number of contributions toward the Centre, which is a clear signal that many States Parties wish to make a political or financial investment, as this facility belongs to us all. We would like to see all States Parties make even a symbolic contribution to the establishment of the new Centre establishment, and we look forward to the TS's future briefings on this important initiative.

Finally, Mr. Chair, we were very pleased to learn that the Technical Secretariat has reached gender parity in its senior management cadre. Qualified women have been hired in several senior positions, and the number of women applying for professional posts in the OPCW has never been higher. The Director General has prioritized gender equality in the OPCW and has joined the International Gender Champions Initiative. We applaud him for his efforts. Canada will continue to promote, in accordance with its Feminist International Assistance Policy, an equal voice for women in the OPCW, and in the chemical sector worldwide. To that end, we were pleased to have sponsored women to participate in the 2019 Women in Chemistry Symposium and subsequent analytical chemistry course in late June.

I ask, Mr. Chair, that the full version of this statement be made an official document of this meeting of the Executive Council and published on the external server and public website of the OPCW.