



Statement by H.E. Mr. Kevin Kelly

**Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Organisation for the
Prohibition of Chemical Weapons**

**24th Session of the Conference of State Parties
National Statement**

Chair,

1. At the outset, I would like to express our congratulations to you on your appointment as the Chairperson of the 24th Session of the Conference of State Parties. I would like to assure you of my delegations support in your efforts. I would also like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Andrea Perugini, Chairperson of the Executive Council, for his skilful efforts in guiding the work of the Council over the course of 2019.
2. Ireland would also like to take this opportunity to commend the leadership of Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias and in particular, his personal commitment to mainstreaming a gender perspective in the work of the Organisation. Ireland will continue to strive for - and underline the importance of - the equal participation of women and men in all disarmament discussions and decisions, including here in The Hague.
3. Ireland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I will add the following in a national capacity.

Chair,

4. The use of chemical weapons in Syria, Iraq, Malaysia and in Salisbury in the U.K. has seriously threatened to undermine the universal prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, as enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The use of these weapons is an affront to the international rules-based system on which we all depend for our security and wellbeing. We welcome the actions undertaken to date to translate the widespread condemnation of those who breach their obligations under the CWC into action on accountability, and more must be done on this account. A failure to ensure effective accountability risks emboldening those who dare to use them.
5. Ireland supported the June 2018 Decision on “Addressing the threat from chemical weapons use” taken by the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of States Parties to the CWC. By enhancing the capacity and capabilities of the OPCW to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria and, by request, elsewhere, this decision will strengthen the implementation of CWC and help to end impunity for the use of these weapons.
6. We welcome the establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) . The publication of the IIT’s first report will be an important step towards identifying those responsible for chemical weapons use in Syria and holding perpetrators to account.
7. Ireland also commends France for its political leadership in creating the International Partnership Against the Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. Through the promotion of greater information sharing about chemical weapons use, including sanctions information, the Partnership has a crucial role to play in supporting and complementing existing organisations and mechanisms and in helping to strengthen the capacity of states to address chemical weapons use and to hold responsible parties accountable.

Chair,

8. The OPCW remains a vital part of preserving the global norm against the use of chemical weapons. We remain committed to its integrity and objectivity. It is ideally placed to examine new threats and challenges; however, the existence of an international Convention itself does not guarantee security. The strength and effectiveness of the CWC is only derived from what the States Parties are willing to devote to it, and we must continue to provide it with the necessary support to deliver our collective aims. We must stand united against any attempt to undermine the integrity of the Convention and the work of the OPCW. Ireland was pleased to support the resolution on chemical weapons at this year's First Committee and would like to commend Poland for their efforts in ensuring the resolution passed, again with a strong majority.

9. Since the CWC entered into force, 97% of declared warfare agents have been destroyed under strict international verification overseen by the OPCW. This is a remarkable achievement. However, we remain conscious that the CWC exists in a scientific context which has altered considerably from the assumptions that underpinned the original text. The fast pace of scientific and technological developments means that new chemicals are continually being developed, together with the evolution of new methods of production. We need to remain vigilant and ensure that our Convention can keep pace with new advancements in chemical weapons. To this end, Ireland supports the recommendation of the Technical Secretariat for the inclusion of additional families of chemicals into Schedule 1 of the Convention.

Chair,

10. Last year's Fourth Review Conference highlighted that considerable challenges remain on the path to ensuring a world free from the threat of chemical weapons. The absence of agreement on a final document providing guidance for the OPCW's future work was disappointing. Against this backdrop, efforts over the past year by States Parties to build on the review process and shape the development of the

OPCW as it evolves and adapts to the new challenges has helped to serve and advance our collective aims.

11. Ireland would like to express our appreciation for the effective efforts of the Co-Facilitators Ambassadors Puja of Indonesia and Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador to find agreement among States Parties on a way forward for this organisation. My delegation carefully examined the draft proposal brought forward by the Chair of the Executive Council in cooperation with the Co-Facilitators. In our view, the topics covered in this proposal are crucial to the future of this organisation and the Convention which it serves. We look forward to working with all delegations and the facilitators across all clusters to advance our collective efforts to advance our shared goal of ridding the world of chemical weapons.

Chair,

12. In addition to the expertise in the Technical Secretariat upon which all States Parties rely, our work is also enriched by the expertise and input at the Conferences of States Parties of experts from academia and from civil society. We are deeply concerned at any attempts to limit the contribution that has been, and must continue to be, made by expertise from outside the Organisation. We also rely on civil society to broaden the understanding of wider society of what States are doing to create a world free of the scourge of chemical weapons. Ireland will continue in our efforts to champion the valuable role that civil society organisations play in our common endeavour.

Chair

13. It is utterly unacceptable that over a century after their first use, chemical weapons are still being used to inflict such cruel harm on combatants, civilians, and most devastatingly, on children. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu has stated that 'Chemical weapons are a relic of the past and must remain so', a view which we fully endorse. The development and use of chemical

weapons, including the use of any toxic chemicals as weapons, by anyone - state or non-state - is absolutely unacceptable and must be both rigorously condemned by the international community and punished to the full extent of international law. We appeal to all States Parties to unite and intensify efforts to uphold the global norm against chemical weapons.

14. In closing, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Conference and be published on the OPCW website and extranet.

Thank You