



NEW ZEALAND

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

AT THE 93ST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

10 March 2020

Thank you, Chair. Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

We would like to first **express our condolences** to the family, to Australia, and to the OPCW, on the passing of an Australian OPCW inspector due to natural causes. We recognise the dedication of OPCW inspectors and their invaluable contribution to the security and safety of us all.

In light of continuous attacks on the OPCW and its work, it is disturbing that we feel at the outset of this Executive Council session that we must continue to state the obvious: **New Zealand has full confidence in all the work carried out by the OPCW;** we have full confidence in the professionalism and impartiality of its teams; and we have full confidence in the work done to establish the facts and address the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The OPCW is ably and impartially carrying out the work we as States Parties asked it to do, and it is incumbent on all of us to support the OPCW so it can continue its work.

We would like to thank the Technical Secretariat for last week's **update on the Syria chemical weapons file**. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic must honour the commitments it made when it signed up to the Chemical Weapons Convention, including submitting a full declaration. As a States Party, the Syrian Arab Republic also has the obligation to implement the June 2018 decision adopted by the Conference of the States Parties. That includes an obligation to assist and fully cooperate with the OPCW, as required under paragraph 7 of Article VII of the Chemical Weapons Convention and under

UN Security Council Resolution 2118. We urge the Syrian Government to fully honour their obligations in good faith.

At this point in time, the **Investigation and Identification Team's** efforts to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons use in Syria are crucial. After the discontinuation of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, we welcome the IIT's investigation to identify the perpetrators of the horrific chemical weapon attacks in Syria and we look forward to receiving the IIT's first report soon.

We thank Director-General Arias for the recent update to States Parties on the report of the **Independent Investigation into possible Breaches of Confidentiality**. We note the report's conclusions, and are disappointed that two former OPCW employees have been found to have violated their obligations concerning the protection of confidential information. As the Director-General has stated, these two former OPCW employees are not whistle-blowers, but instead they are individuals who could not accept that their views were not backed by evidence, took matters into their own hands and breached their obligations to the organisation. Their conclusions have ultimately proven to be erroneous, uninformed, and wrong. We look forward to closing this chapter and moving on with the OPCW's important work on combatting chemical weapons.

Looking ahead, an important initiative is addressing the use of **Central Nervous System Acting Chemicals** in aerosolised form for law enforcement purposes. Last year a decision was presented by Australia, Switzerland and the United States of America relating to the use of CNS-acting chemicals, which New Zealand has co-sponsored. As States Parties to the Convention we should all be worried about the serious health and safety risks posed by these chemicals and the possibility of their deliberate misuse. New Zealand hopes the Council will soon be in a position to adopt a decision on CNS-acting chemicals by consensus.

Over these past months New Zealand has participated in the **Facilitation on Organisational Issues**, and we wish to express our appreciation to Ambassador Gomez of El Salvador and Ambassador Puja of Indonesia for their adept leadership. We reiterate New Zealand's full support for this process and, like others here today, we wish to see further action taken to help ensure the OPCW remains fit for purpose now and into the future. We look forward to continuing our work with all States Parties to help achieve these outcomes.

Thank you, Chair. Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.