



AUSTRALIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MATTHEW NEUHAUS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-THIRD SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

I would like to start by taking a few moments to acknowledge the recent sad passing, due to natural causes, of an Australian OPCW inspector while on duty. We greatly appreciate the caring approach of the Director-General, the sensitive handling of this tragic situation, and the condolences expressed by many delegations here today.

His passing is a reminder to us that the job of an OPCW inspector is no ordinary occupation. It is a job that takes inspectors away from their homes and their loved ones, to all corners of the world. I would like to pay tribute to these men and women, and to their families, for their hard work, professionalism and commitment to delivering a world free of chemical weapons.

I would like to thank on behalf of Australia, Ambassador Puja and Ambassador Gómez for their tireless work in carrying forward the facilitation on organisational issues. Administration is rarely a glamorous topic, but it is the essential foundation upon which all other work can take place. A strong and appropriately structured OPCW will put the Organisation on the best footing to meet the challenges of the future.

I am honoured to be nominated by our illustrious co-facilitators to take up where they have left off, together with my colleague Ambassador Dupuy of Uruguay. I look forward to continuing the very positive discussion and productive process we have enjoyed to date. We will be relying on the commitment and cooperation of all delegations as we find our way forward on these key issues for the smooth working of our Organisation.

There has been much said, here and elsewhere, about the work of the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission, including by those who would seek to use its work to undermine the credibility of the OPCW.

It is against this backdrop that I welcome the briefing by Director-General Fernando Arias last month on the possible breaches of confidentiality regarding the Douma Fact-Finding Mission report, and the open and transparent way in which he has dealt with this issue.

I welcome the findings of the report and look forward to now moving on and focusing on the important task of holding accountable the users of chemical weapons.



This brings me to the much-anticipated release of the first report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). I do not wish to pre-empt the outcome of the report, but I would like to reiterate Australia's strong position that any finding of attribution must be acted upon by States Parties. We cannot allow the users of chemical weapons to act with impunity. I urge States Parties not to politicise the outcome of the report.

I would like to conclude today by providing a short update on the draft decision that sets out our understanding regarding the aerosolised use of central nervous system (CNS)-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes, which Australia and others tabled at the Executive Council meeting last October. We have received a high level of engagement from a broad range of States Parties. Many have asked questions. We have welcomed those questions and the opportunity to exchange views.

It is clear to us that there is genuine interest in the substance of this decision. Australia looks forward to continuing a discussion later in this Council Session, under Any Other Business, and through ongoing consultations with co-sponsors and all interested parties. We believe this is an important initiative and one that we hope all States Parties will engage with constructively.

Finally, Mr Chairperson, I would like to pay tribute to your chairmanship of our Executive Council over the past year.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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