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CANADA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LISA HELFAND
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-THIRD SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Director General,
Distinguished Chairperson,
Excellencies and distinguished colleagues,

Two years have passed since the attempted assassination of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, the United Kingdom. Two years since the world learned of the existence of the highly toxic Novichok chemical warfare agents. And in those two years since these tragic incidents, the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) agreed that Novichoks are dangerous chemical weapons that must be subject to the scrutiny of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Canada is proud to have led the effort with the United States and the Netherlands to add Novichoks to Schedule 1A of the Convention’s Annex on Chemicals. However, **all** States Parties can look back at the last Conference of the States Parties (“the Conference”) and say that they have accomplished something important. They put their differences aside and agreed to subject one of the most dangerous chemical weapons ever produced to declaration and verification by the OPCW. The world is safer because of our collective efforts. We remain committed to continuing the fight for a world where chemical weapons are confined to the dark pages of history.

Canada is pleased that the Conference adopted the programme and budget for this year. Its adoption by a clear and convincing majority of States Parties is recognition that the OPCW must have at its disposal the necessary resources to fulfil the entirety of its mandate, including for activities to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in Syria.

We reiterate our unshakable conviction that the perpetrators of chemical weapons use must be exposed and punished for their crimes. If a State Party to the Convention is found to have used chemical weapons, Canada will use its position on the Executive Council (“the Council”)—the body responsible for taking measures in cases of non-compliance—to ensure that these violations against the Convention and the rules-based international order are dealt with. Canada will also continue to support the necessary mechanisms to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria, including the use of chemical weapons, and to hold their perpetrators to account.



Canada remains concerned by the lack of progress in the resolution of outstanding issues in the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration. It has been seven years since the Syrian Arab Republic became a State Party to the Convention, and six years since the experts on the Declaration Assessment Team started working to complete its untrue declaration. How many more years will we have to wait to see the full picture of Syria's chemical weapons programme? Canada calls on the Syrian Arab Republic to stop obscuring the truth and declare, without delay, the full extent of the chemical weapons capability that it is retaining.

Over its tenure on the Council, Canada has been alarmed by the coordinated efforts to undermine the OPCW's work in Syria. This included attacks against the integrity and professionalism of staff, cyberattacks on the organisation's IT infrastructure, and attempts by some States Parties to exploit the ill-informed actions by two former inspectors. We were pleased with the Director General's briefing last month on the results of the investigation into the leaks of confidential information, and expect that the Technical Secretariat ("the Secretariat") will take on board the lessons learned from this unfortunate episode.

On a more positive note, Mr Chairperson, we are pleased with the Secretariat's progress in raising more funds for the ChemTech Centre. Canada has made a contribution of EUR 4.9 million to this project. However, EUR 3.2 million is still outstanding. Even the smallest contribution signals a commitment to the future of this Organisation.

Canada has been encouraged by the recent conversations on governance and organisational issues so ably led by Ambassador Puja of Indonesia and Ambassador Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador. The co-facilitators have done a great job in negotiating a facilitation process and developing recommendations to focus our attention on the issues that require our immediate attention. Canada commits to being a constructive partner during the continuation of the facilitations in the intersessional period.

The OPCW has made tremendous efforts to strike a gender balance in its management positions, especially in recent years. However, Canada remains concerned by the degree to which women remain underrepresented in other parts of the Organisation, and in particular in the Inspectorate. We will continue to promote equal opportunities for women everywhere in the OPCW.

We also wish to take a moment to acknowledge the death of Australian inspector Tom Galvin. Our thoughts are with his family, friends and colleagues, and our Australian friends at this difficult time.

Finally, Mr Chairperson, this is Canada's last statement in a regular session of the Council. I would therefore like to thank the Council for its partnership on some of the most pressing issues of our time, and express our well wishes to Australia who will take over this seat in May.

I ask that the full version of this statement be made an official-series document of the Ninety-Third Session of the Council and published on the external server.

Thank you.