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IRELAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR KEVIN KELLY
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRELAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished Delegates,

Ireland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I will add the following remarks in a national capacity.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, and the Technical Secretariat for seeking to advance the work of the Organisation during these unprecedented times. The outbreak of COVID-19 has constrained the work of the OPCW and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in new and unforeseen ways. This meeting of the Executive Council, though different in form, is a demonstration of the shared desire and determination of all States Parties to the Convention to continue working towards the goal of a world free of chemical weapons. It is also a signal of the importance we attach to the OPCW, ensuring that we can together work to achieve this goal, albeit under new and challenging conditions. I would also like to commend the Technical Secretariat for having explored new ways to deliver remote training on a range of topics in Africa, South East Asia, as well as Latin America, and the Caribbean.

I would like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Andrea Perugini of Italy for his leadership and professionalism as Chair of the Executive Committee during this last year. Under his skilful stewardship we have overcome many challenges and advanced the work of the Organisation. I would also like to congratulate and thank the incoming Chairperson, Ambassador Agustin Vasquez Gomez, for his appointment as the new Chairperson of the Executive Committee and for guiding the preparatory work of the Ninety-Fourth Session of the Executive Council.

I would like to take this opportunity to restate Ireland's support for the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), and welcome its first report on 8 April 2020 on incidents of chemical weapons use in Syria. The IIT report attributes responsibility to the Syrian Air Force for chemical weapons use. The use of these weapons is an egregious violation of international law, a clear breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and a crime against humanity. Ireland has been clear and unequivocal in our condemnation of these attacks and we have long maintained that the integrity and strict application of the Convention must be fully guaranteed. In our view, the findings of the IIT represent an important step in efforts to end impunity for the use of chemical weapons.



Ireland is pleased to co-sponsor the draft decision “Addressing The Possession And Use Of Chemical Weapons By The Syrian Arab Republic” in support of the findings of the IIT. We reiterate our deep concern that Syria has consistently failed to declare and destroy all of its chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities, and that it has failed to cooperate with the Declaration Assessment Team and IIT.

As a State Party to the Convention, Syria is obliged to eliminate its chemical weapons programme and cooperate with the Technical Secretariat. Syria must cooperate with the IIT, allow access for testing to the sites identified, and immediately stop all use of chemical weapons. If Syria fails to cooperate or complete all measures as required under this decision, we stand ready to support the utilisation of all punitive measures available under the Convention to ensure compliance.

The ban on the use of chemical weapons under the Convention is absolute and total. It creates no exemptions, no exceptions. However, the existence of the Convention itself does not guarantee security. The strength of the Convention and norm against the use of chemical weapons is fully dependant on what the international community is willing to dedicate to it. Now, more than ever, it is essential that we engage multilaterally as we collectively face new challenges.

In our view, the international community is at a critical juncture in our efforts to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. A failure to ensure effective accountability risks emboldening those who dare to use them. It is unacceptable that over a century after their first use, chemical weapons are still being used to inflict egregious harm on combatants, civilians, including most devastatingly, on children, and in areas of critical civilian infrastructure such as hospitals. It is incumbent upon the international community to consider appropriate action to ensure accountability. It is imperative to secure justice for the victims of these horrendous attacks and to demonstrate that such attacks will not be tolerated. Ireland stands ready to support any investigations and prosecutions of chemical weapons use to the greatest extent possible. Ireland remains fully committed to the international rules based order, and to the International Criminal Court as an integral part of this order as a central institution in the fight against impunity and the pursuit of justice, which are essential components of sustainable peace, security, and reconciliation.

Ireland welcomed and supported the decision by the EU to impose restrictive measures on high-level Syrian officials and entities for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons, and we are willing to consider additional restrictive measures on persons and entities as appropriate.

Ireland will continue to work with all partners and through the Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons to uphold the core values of our Convention. We commend the work of the OPCW and recognise the professionalism, expertise, and tireless commitment of the Director-General, the Technical Secretariat, and the staff of the Organisation. We call on all States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to honour their commitments and obligations faithfully.

I would kindly ask that this statement be issued as an official document and placed on the OPCW public website.

Thank you.