



**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LYNDAL WALKER PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

6 - 9 OCTOBER 2020

Mr Chairperson,

We are grateful to Ambassador Agustin Vásquez Gómez and the Technical Secretariat for finding the means to organise the 95<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Executive Council during these challenging times. We look forward to the day we are all able to be present in the Ieper Room again. In the meantime we hope technical solutions are being explored that would once again allow for two-way participation for all States Parties.

New Zealand is deeply troubled by the recent announcement from Germany that Russian citizen and leading opposition politician Mr Alexei Navalny was poisoned with a nerve agent from the Novichok group of chemicals. This raises serious questions that must be answered. Three independent laboratories have verified that a Novichok nerve agent was used. We note the OPCW is providing technical assistance to Germany under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) to analyse samples taken from Mr Navalny, and New Zealand looks forward to the OPCW's report on its findings as soon as they are available.

Any use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances is unacceptable. The use of a chemical weapon against Mr Navalny is highly repugnant and an affront to the global rules and norms that we have collectively committed to uphold. Not only does such an act undermine the CWC, but it also makes a mockery of the historic consensus decision at the Conference of the States Parties last year to amend the Annex on Chemicals to the CWC to include Novichok families of chemicals. We call on the Russian Federation to cooperate fully with the international community and the OPCW to provide answers.

Mr Chairperson,

New Zealand remains gravely concerned by the repeated, confirmed use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic. We remind Syria of the Executive Council decision adopted on 9 July 2020, which New Zealand co-sponsored, on Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic. We expect Syria to comply with the Executive Council decision and to cooperate with the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). We also wish to thank the OPCW Declarations Assessment Team (DAT) for its tireless work to resolve the remaining gaps, discrepancies, and inconsistencies relating to Syria's declaration.

Syria must fulfil the obligations it took on when it signed up to this Convention in 2013 and declare its chemical weapon programme, in full and without delay.

New Zealand also wants to make progress in addressing the use of central nervous system (CNS)-acting chemicals in aerosolised form for law enforcement purposes. We remain concerned about the serious health and safety risks posed by these chemicals and the possibility of their deliberate misuse. New Zealand believes that the aerosolized use of CNS-acting chemicals is not acceptable for law enforcement purposes and we want to ensure that this issue remains on the Council's agenda.

Finally, New Zealand wishes to acknowledge the exceptional work of the Organisation, the Technical Secretariat and the Director-General in particular. In adapting and delivering to the highest standards despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are grateful for your continued diligence, professionalism and transparency, and for your work to uphold the CWC.

Thank you Mr Chairperson.

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