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IRELAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR KEVIN KELLY
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRELAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-FIFTH 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.

To begin, I would like to thank the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, and the Technical Secretariat for their continued commitment to progressing the work of the Organisation and to ensuring the ongoing implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) as we continue to face the challenges of COVID-19.

I also thank you for guiding the preparatory work for this Ninety-Fifth Session of the Executive Council. Though we are once again meeting in an unusual format, our shared determination to continue working towards the goal of a world free of chemical weapons remains unchanged.

The ban on the use of chemical weapons under the Convention is absolute and total. Any use of chemical weapons is a breach of international law and completely unacceptable. It is incumbent upon States Parties to the Convention to dedicate themselves to upholding the Convention and non-use of chemical weapons.

At the previous session of the Executive Council, I expressed a very real concern that we were at a critical juncture. Since then, the situation has deteriorated with a further incident of the use of Novichok; itself only recently added to the Schedule. This is a key moment to assert the international community’s rejection of any attempt to undermine the clear and absolute norm established by the Convention. Impunity deprives victims of justice, emboldens perpetrators, and undermines the Convention itself. 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, to the fight against impunity, and the pursuit of justice, which we believe are essential components of sustainable peace, security, and reconciliation.



Ireland condemns in the strongest possible terms the poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. This attempted assassination of a leading political figure in a European country is abhorrent to all those who value the fundamental principles of democracy and respect for human rights as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights.

The confirmation by the German authorities, and the verification by French and Swedish laboratories of the use of a nerve agent belonging to the “Novichok” family is deeply troubling.

The international community cannot remain silent in the face of such an incident. We support Germany’s call for a thorough and transparent investigation by the Russian authorities and for them to fully cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation so that those responsible are held to account.

Ireland reaffirms our condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force as concluded by the first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). The first IIT report, which attributes responsibility to the Syrian Air Force for chemical weapons use, represented an important step in efforts to end impunity for the use of chemical weapons. We remain deeply concerned that Syria has consistently failed to declare and destroy all of its chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities, and remains uncooperative with the Declaration Assessment Team and IIT.

The decision taken at the July Executive Council session in response to the IIT report established clear steps to be taken by the Syrian Government in order to return to full compliance with the Convention. As a co-sponsor of this decision, we call on the Syrian Arab Government to comply fully with the measures detailed in the decision, and we look forward to the report by the Director-General on the response provided by Syria in due course. As a State Party to the Convention, Syria is duty-bound to eliminate its chemical weapons programme, and to 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. Failure to do so will not be tolerated by States Parties to the Convention, and we stand ready to support the utilisation of all punitive measures available under this Convention to ensure compliance.

Ireland supports the EU’s restrictive measures on high-level Syrian officials and entities for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons, and will 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 IIT, 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.