



OPCW

Executive Council

Ninety-Fifth Session
6 – 9 October 2020

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ENGLISH and FRENCH only

CANADA

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

Mr Director-General,
Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies and colleagues,

Three months ago, the Executive Council (“the Council”) acted effectively and responsibly when a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) violated its core prohibitions. The Syrian Arab Air Force used sarin and chlorine in three instances in March 2017 in Ltamenah, adding to the long list of attacks perpetrated by the Syrian regime with a prohibited weapon of mass destruction.

The deadline imposed on Syria by the Council in decision EC-94/DEC.2 approaches. We urge Syria to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”). This is not a situation where small improvements are sufficient, or where symbolic gestures will appease the international community. Anything less than a complete and accurate declaration is a failure to meet the criteria set out in the decision. Now is not the time for half measures.

The Council shows its continued division on what should be a unifying issue. This is not a political battle. It is a fight for an established global norm against the use of chemical weapons. We are disappointed and dismayed that three States Parties voted against EC-94/DEC.2, and that nine States Parties abstained. None should feel comfortable permitting a State Party to violate the Convention with impunity.

Canada reiterates once again its full support for the Investigation and Identification Team. Its existence is legitimate and its work is independent, impartial, and professional, despite the obstacles and challenges it faces. We look forward to seeing its next report.

The recent assassination attempt against Alexei Navalny with a Novichok-type military-grade nerve agent is deeply troubling. Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs stated our strong condemnation of this outrageous attack. Russian authorities must explain what happened so that those responsible may be held to account without delay.

The adoption of the Programme and Budget for 2021 must remain a top priority at next month’s Conference of the States Parties. The adoption of the Budget must be accompanied by full and timely payment of assessed contributions by all States Parties.



Canada fully supports an omnibus decision on the Budget. We understand the legitimate concerns of many States Parties about recurring challenges faced by the OPCW, not by its own fault but by the late or non-payment of assessed contributions. However, we urge States Parties to voice these concerns as part of a comprehensive conversation about the OPCW's financial situation, which has already been foreshadowed by the Secretariat.

Canada remains concerned by the potential for States to use central nervous system-acting chemicals (CNS-acting chemicals) for law enforcement purposes. We hope for an agreement on this issue at the Ninety-Fifth Session of the Council. This is an opportunity to once again address concerns imposed by novel chemical threats.

We are very pleased that the final gap in funding for the Centre for Chemistry and Technology is closing rapidly. In this regard, I wish to draw attention to a second Canadian contribution in the amount of CAD 2.5 million, which raises Canada's total contribution to CAD 10 million (EUR 6.57 million). In committing this additional funding, Canada challenges other States Parties to commit the roughly EUR 1.3 million that remains. We are confident that the challenge will be met, and that we will enable this critical international security project to proceed as planned.

Thank you.

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