



Ireland

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Kevin Kelly

**Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Organisation for the
Prohibition of Chemical Weapons**

At the 25th Session of the Conference of State Parties

30 November – 4 December 2020

Chairperson,

Director-General,

Distinguished Delegates,

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

Chair,

Ireland joins others in warmly congratulating you on your appointment as Chair of the 25th Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. I can assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I would also like to take this opportunity to express Ireland's appreciation to the outgoing Chair, Ambassador Kostov of Bulgaria, and to Chairperson of the Executive Council, Ambassador Agustin Vasquez Gomez of El Salvador. I also thank Director-General Arias for his leadership in ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention in spite of the challenges presented by the pandemic. Navigating the myriad of complex issues presented by the pandemic remains a problem for us all, and we thank Germany for their initiative which seeks to address our preparedness in this regard.

The professional, impartial and objective work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat under Director-General Arias' leadership is vital as we confront the immense challenges posed by chemical weapons. We commend his efforts to improve gender balance and geographical distribution of positions within the Organisation. As UNIDIR's recent research further highlighted, women's under-representation can reinforce existing biases in scientific research and thwart opportunities for discovery and innovation. We strongly support the Organisation's engagement in events such as the Women in Chemistry Symposium, Ada Lovelace Day and Diversify Chemistry, all of which combat harmful gender stereotypes in science.

Chair,

Whether it be in Iraq, Malaysia, Syria, the UK, or now Russia, the marked increase in the use of chemical weapons in recent years is deeply disturbing. With each incident, the universal prohibition of Chemical Weapons Use, as enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), is weakened further. The use of these weapons is an affront to the international rules-based system on which we all depend for our security and wellbeing. Ireland unequivocally condemns such use. The international community must redouble efforts to prevent impunity in all cases. Ireland calls on all States Parties to uphold the integrity of the CWC and cooperate fully with the OPCW, its Fact-Finding Missions and Investigation and Identification Team.

In July, the Executive Council adopted a Decision based on the findings of the first IIT report which attributed responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in Ltamenah, Syria in 2017 to the Syrian Air Force. The IIT's findings represent an important step in efforts to end impunity for the use of chemical weapons. Ireland co-sponsored this Decision which established clear steps the Syrian Government needed to take to return to full compliance with the CWC. Ireland deeply regrets Syria's wholly inadequate response to that request. Let us be clear, Syria must act immediately to meet its legal obligations under the CWC and under UN Security Council Resolution 2118. As a State Party to the Convention, Syria is bound to immediately stop all use of chemical weapons and eliminate in its entirety its chemical weapons programme.

Chair,

Complete and accurate declarations go to the heart of any verification effort. After some 7 years of work, the OPCW is clear that the declaration by Syria in 2013 still cannot be considered accurate or complete. This is due to the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in Syria's accounts that remain unresolved. Syria must cooperate actively, openly and in good faith with the OPCW. Ireland reiterates its support for the EU's restrictive measures on high-level Syrian officials and entities involved in the development and use of chemical weapons. Furthermore, Ireland stands ready to support the utilisation of all measures available under the CWC to ensure compliance. To that end, we have co-sponsored the Draft Decision "Addressing The Possession And Use Of Chemical Weapons By The Syrian Arab Republic" to be considered at this Conference. Ireland urges States Parties to support the Decision's adoption.

Chair,

Ireland condemns in the strongest possible terms the attempted assassination of Alexei Navalny in August, and we fully align with the joint statement on this case delivered at this Conference. The OPCW summary report independently confirmed what had already been established by French, German and Swedish labs; there was an attempt to murder Alexei Navalny with a chemical agent. This breach of international law is deeply troubling and completely unacceptable. We urge Russia, as a state party to the CWC, to engage in good faith with the OPCW, and conduct a full investigation into this violation of the CWC. Furthermore, we restate our support for the restrictive measures imposed by the European Union against six Russian individuals and one entity involved in the assassination attempt.

The international community is at a critical juncture in our efforts to prevent the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons. A failure to ensure effective accountability risks emboldening those who dare to use them. Ireland remains fully committed to international law, the fight against impunity, and the pursuit of justice, which are essential components of sustainable peace, security, and reconciliation. Impunity deprives victims of justice, emboldens perpetrators and undermines the Convention itself.

To prevent chemical weapons use, we must ensure accountability and end impunity in the use of these appalling weapons anywhere, any time. The OPCW is crucial in this regard. Its diligence, professionalism and impartiality while addressing the use of chemical weapons offer a vital first step towards accountability and an end to impunity. We fully support the work of the OPCW and reject continued efforts to undermine its impartiality. We must protect the integrity of the Convention, a key instrument of the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime, and to uphold the global chemical weapons non-use norm. In this regard, Ireland commends France for its political leadership in creating the International Partnership Against the Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. Through the promotion of greater information sharing about chemical weapons use, including sanctions information, the Partnership has a crucial role to play in supporting and complementing existing organisations

and mechanisms and in helping to strengthen the capacity of states to address chemical weapons use and to hold responsible parties accountable.

Chair,

In closing, Ireland fully supports Director-General's proposed programme and budget for 2021. We believe the proposed budget is both proportionate and justified and will enable the OPCW to continue its vital work throughout 2021.

I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Conference and be published on the OPCW website and extranet.

Thank You

ENDS