

Right of reply by the Delegation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the statement by the Delegation of the Russian Federation at the 25th session of the Conference of States Parties.

The United Kingdom rejects the Russian Federation's assertion in its national statement that the confirmed use of chemical weapons in the UK, Russia and Syria amounts to political games and provocations. It is deeply regrettable that the Russian Federation is choosing to ignore the facts. But facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored.

The use of a Novichok nerve agent in Salisbury, UK, in 2018 was a despicable act. It cost a British national her life and left four others desperately ill. Only Russia had the technical means, operational experience and motive to carry out the attack. The Crown Prosecution Service had enough evidence to bring charges against two GRU officers.

In August we saw a further assassination attempt using a Novichok nerve agent: this time against a Russian opposition politician on Russian soil. There is no plausible explanation other than Russian involvement and responsibility.

Russia must declare the full extent of its Novichok programme. Those responsible for mounting these appalling chemical weapons attacks must be held to account.

The OPCW has established the Syrian regime's responsibility for chemical weapons use on three separate occasions. These are the facts established by OPCW experts. Chemical weapons use by States Parties is a violation of the central tenet of the Chemical Weapons Convention and international law. Identifying those responsible is critical to preventing their re-emergence. The UK will not allow the actions of a small number of States Parties to undermine the hard-won international agreement to end the development and use of these abhorrent weapons.