



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Twenty-Fifth Session
30 November – 1 December 2020 (Part I)

C-25/NAT.42
30 November 2020
ENGLISH and FRENCH only

CANADA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LISA HELFAND
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA TO THE OPCW
AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Distinguished Chairperson,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Colleagues,

I welcome your election, Mr Chairperson, to lead the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties (“the Conference”). Please be assured that you have Canada’s full confidence.

The challenges posed by COVID-19 are unprecedented. Canada wishes to compliment the Technical Secretariat on its efforts to keep its staff and representatives of States Parties safe while continuing to implement the OPCW’s important mandate.

COVID-19 is not the only crisis faced by the OPCW. The Syrian Arab Air Force used sarin and chlorine in Ltamenah in March 2017, bringing the number of confirmed chemical weapons attacks conducted by the Syrian regime to seven. The Executive Council (“the Council”) condemned these actions and demanded Syria return to compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”). Unfortunately, Syria has refused to cooperate, falsely claiming to be compliant despite a startling number of inconsistencies, gaps, and discrepancies in its initial declaration and its use of chemical weapons against its own people. Syria’s initial declaration to the OPCW remains incomplete seven years after joining the Organisation.

Lives and communities will continue to be destroyed so long as chemical weapons continue to be used.

We cannot permit those who use chemical weapons to do so with impunity. There must be consequences for such crimes. Until Syria fully declares its chemical weapons stockpile and completes its initial declaration, its rights and privileges as a State Party should be suspended. We support action in other fora to hold the Syrian regime accountable for all of its war crimes.

Canada acknowledges the reports of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) issued on 1 October 2020. Though the reports are inconclusive, we compliment the FFM on its professionalism.



The OPCW confirmed that a nerve agent very similar to the novichok-type agents added to Schedule 1 last year was used in the attempted assassination of Alexei Navalny in the Russian Federation. The use of any toxic chemical for assassination is a violation of the Convention. We repeat our 2018 demand that the Russian Federation fully declare its novichok programme. We urge the Russian Federation to refrain from encouraging or disseminating false narratives and disinformation and to commit to full transparency in order to determine the circumstances around this deplorable act.

Canada remains concerned by the potential for States to use central nervous system-acting chemicals in aerosolised form for law enforcement purposes. The Scientific Advisory Board was clear in its conclusion that this category of chemicals is not appropriate for use in law enforcement. We hope the Council can reach a decision on this matter in the new year.

Canada fully supports the omnibus draft decision on the Programme and Budget for 2021.

We understand the concerns of many States Parties about financial challenges faced by the OPCW, caused largely by the late or non-payment of assessed contributions. A comprehensive conversation on this matter should take place as soon as possible.

Canada believes that any decision on the next external auditor must be based exclusively on the technical merits of the candidates, with due consideration given to value for money.

Finally, we are pleased to see increasing numbers of countries answer the challenge issued by Canada in the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction to close the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology's funding gap. We were also pleased to announce in September our contribution of a further 2.5 million Canadian dollars (CAD), raising our national contribution to this project to CAD 10 million (EUR 6.5 million). We urge States Parties to pledge the remaining funds and enable construction to begin on this important tool that will benefit us all.

I ask, Mr Chairperson, that the full version of this statement be made an official-series document of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference and published on the external server and public website of the OPCW.

Thank you.

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