

Intervention by Australia, Canada and New Zealand at the 97th session of the Executive Council under Agenda item 6 (f) “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use”

Delivered by H.E. Matthew Neuhaus, Ambassador of Australia to the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Permanent Representative to the OPCW.

Mr. Chair,

I would like to deliver this intervention on behalf of Canada, New Zealand, and my own country, Australia.

In its second report, dated 12 April 2021, the OPCW’s Investigation and Identification Team reached the conclusion that there are reasonable grounds to believe that on 4 February 2018 a military helicopter of the Syrian Arab Air Force, under the control of the Tiger Forces, hit eastern Saraqib by dropping at least one cylinder. The cylinder ruptured and released chlorine over a large area, affecting 12 named individuals.

These latest findings are yet another example of the concerning pattern of violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention by the Syrian Arab Republic.

The 25th Conference of the States Parties decided to suspend several rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention. We supported this decision to urge Syria to come into compliance with its Convention obligations.

We are disappointed that the Syrian Arab Republic still has not completed any of the measures stipulated in paragraph 5 of EC94/Dec.2, however we encourage the Syrian Arab Republic to continue engagement with the OPCW.

We commend the Technical Secretariat’s tireless commitment to working with Syria to complete these measures. We hope in response that Syria will engage in good faith with the Secretariat to complete its initial chemical weapons declaration once and for all.

Thank you Mr. Chair.