



# UK Delegation to the OPCW

**97th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE ORGANISATION FOR  
THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS**

**AGENDA ITEM 6F, ADDRESSING THE THREAT FROM CHEMICAL WEAPONS  
USE**

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT  
BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND ON THE USE OF A NOVICHOK NERVE  
AGENT**

Thank you Mr Chair,

Later this week, on 8 July, it will be the three year anniversary of the death of Dawn Sturgess. She died a horrible death, poisoned by a nerve agent first researched in the former Soviet Union during the 1980s; as part of a programme to develop a fourth generation of nerve agents, known as Novichok.

The Russian Federation developed Novichok nerve agents even as the prohibition on chemical weapons was enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention. Many details of Russia's secret Novichok programme were revealed by the chemist Vil Mirzayanov in the early 1990s. Mr Mirzayanov was charged with revealing state secrets.

Next month will see the one year anniversary of another attack, again using a Novichok nerve agent. On 20 August 2020, Alexei Navalny was poisoned on Russian Federation territory. Fortunately, he survived. OPCW designated laboratories analysed samples taken from Alexei Navalny. They confirmed the presence of a nerve agent from the Novichok group.

The basic facts of the case are established. Russia has not explained to this Council who was responsible; nor what steps the Russian Federation has taken to identify them and to hold them to account. Article VII of the Convention sets out clearly the legal obligations of all States Parties to implement and uphold the provisions of the Convention on their territory.

States Parties have made clear the widespread concern over this incident and its implications. Russia's request for Technical Assistance last October appears to be in suspended animation. Russia has refused to follow standard practice for a TAV. Yet it insists that the request has not been withdrawn. When will this Council see progress?

The Russian Federation's actions are compatible neither with its obligations as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention; nor as a member of this Council, charged with promoting compliance with the Convention. We will continue to press the Russian Federation for a full explanation of what happened to Mr Navalny. We call on the Russian Federation to declare all aspects of its Novichok programme; and

to work with the OPCW to destroy all chemical weapons in its possession transparently and entirely.

Thank you Mr Chair.