



**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LYNDA WALKER PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

5 - 8 OCTOBER 2021

Mr Chairperson,

New Zealand would like to express its sincere appreciation for the ongoing work of the Organisation, the Technical Secretariat and the Director-General as we meet for the sixth time under the shadow of the pandemic. We applaud your continued diligence, professionalism and transparency to uphold the Chemical Weapons Convention. Your work makes an important contribution to our collective global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

Given the importance of the work of the Organisation, we as States Parties have a responsibility to ensure it is not undermined through lack of resources. As the Executive Council considers the Organisation's proposed Programme and Budget for the next two years, we urge all members to support the consensus adoption of the biennial budget. Not only will this provide OPCW the financial support required to carry out its mandate and full programme of work, but the biennial budget will offer the Organisation a clearer sense of priorities for the years ahead.

The Organisation's ongoing and important work includes eliminating chemical weapons, supporting peaceful uses of chemistry and the verification of our chemical industries, all as part of our joint effort to prevent chemical weapons ever causing death or harm again. New Zealand remains resolute in our rejection and condemnation of any use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances.

New Zealand remains deeply troubled by the poisoning of Mr Alexei Navalny. The confirmed use of a Novichok agent has raised serious questions that have not yet been answered. The use of a chemical weapon against Mr Navalny is an affront to the global rules and norms that we have collectively committed to uphold. We therefore reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to cooperate fully with the international community and the OPCW to provide answers and clarify what took place.

We are equally concerned by the repeated and confirmed use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic. We remind Syria of its obligations following the adoption of the April decision *Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic*, and urge Syria to comply with the decision of the 25th Conference of the States Parties without delay. Syria must not be allowed to escape full accountability.

Thank you Mr Chairperson.