



OPCW

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Ninety-Eighth Session
5 – 7 October 2021

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18 October 2021
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UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

**REQUEST FOR CIRCULATION OF A DOCUMENT
AT THE NINETY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

The Permanent Representation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the OPCW has requested that a note verbale addressed to the Technical Secretariat, dated 18 October 2021, be circulated as an official document of the Ninety-Eighth Session of the Executive Council.

Annex: Note Verbale No. 101/2021 from the Permanent Representation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the OPCW Addressed to the Technical Secretariat, Dated 18 October 2021



Annex

**NOTE VERBALE NO. 101/2021 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF
THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO
THE OPCW ADDRESSED TO THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT,
DATED 18 OCTOBER 2021**

Note No. 101/2021

Her Britannic Majesty's Permanent Representation to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) presents its compliments to the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and has the honour to request it to convey to the Russian Federation's Permanent Representation to the OPCW, the following response to Note Verbale No.44 received via the OPCW Technical Secretariat (NV/ODG-155/21) on 8 October 2021.

The United Kingdom recalls that it submitted Note Verbale No. 93/2021 on 5 October 2021, containing questions on behalf of 45 states parties to the Russian Federation pursuant to Article IX, paragraph 2 of the Convention. The poisoning of Mr Alexei Navalny on Russian soil was a clear instance of a situation causing doubt about compliance with the Convention; and specifically, of Russia's observance of its obligations under the Convention.

The United Kingdom acknowledges the Russian Federation's Note Verbale No. 44, dated 7 October 2021 and received on 8 October 2021. The United Kingdom notes that the Note does not answer the questions. Nor does it provide information sufficient to answer the doubt or concern raised along with an explanation of how the information provided resolves the matter.

The United Kingdom recalls that the Soviet Union developed a new class of fourth generation nerve agents, known as Novichoks. The primary institute involved in this programme was a branch of the State Institute for Organic Chemistry and Technology at Shikhany. The codeword for the offensive chemical weapons programme (of which Novichok nerve agents were a part) was FOLIANT. It is highly likely that Novichok nerve agents were developed to circumvent international chemical weapons controls. The United Kingdom considers that the Russian state used Novichok agents in Salisbury in the United Kingdom in 2018, and again against Mr Navalny in Russia in 2020. The United Kingdom further recalls that the Russian Federation indicated in 2000 that there was no information which was required to be

declared with relation to Novichoks. The Russian Federation declared in 2017 that it had completed the destruction of its stocks of chemical weapons.

The United Kingdom notes that while failing to answer the questions submitted by 45 states parties, the Russian Federation has attached several questions to its Note Verbale No. 44, referring to Article IX, paragraph 2.

The United Kingdom notes that the OPCW Technical Secretariat is not a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. There is no basis under Article IX, paragraph 2 for a state party to address questions to the Technical Secretariat.

The United Kingdom notes that the questions addressed by the Russian Federation to other states parties do not relate to the United Kingdom's obligations under the Convention.

The United Kingdom rejects the assertions made by the Russian Federation in Note Verbale No. 44. The United Kingdom understands these assertions as an attempt to deflect Russian state responsibility for the chemical weapons attack on Mr Navalny.

With regard to the questions posed by the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom:

"Why is the role of Ms Pevchikh – a newly British citizen who accompanied Alexey Navalny to Berlin and, according to various reports, has close ties to the British intelligence community – in the whole affair so carefully concealed?"

The United Kingdom notes that media reports have documented this individual's role in Mr Navalny's anti-corruption organisation.

"Why were traces of some kind of chemicals found on the water bottle she had bought in the airport departure area? Why this bottle was not handed over to Russian law enforcement authorities as physical evidence? For what reason are the Russian law enforcement authorities not given the opportunity to question Ms Pevchikh herself?"

The United Kingdom has complete confidence in the Federal Republic of Germany's handling of the evidence; in the conclusions it has drawn from that evidence; and in

the replies the Federal Republic of Germany has given to the Russian Federation's questions. The United Kingdom has nothing to add to those replies.

The United Kingdom recalls that the established facts of this case are:

- i) Mr Navalny fell ill and received initial medical treatment, in the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation had full access to the patient, affording the opportunity to recover biomedical samples of the kind which five separate laboratories used to establish the presence of a cholinesterase inhibitor structurally similar to toxic chemicals added to the Chemical Weapons Convention Schedules in 2019.
- ii) The Russian Federation has still not accounted for how a chemical weapon came to be used on its territory.
- iii) The Russian Federation has stalled and effectively blocked the OPCW Technical Secretariat from deploying a technical assistance visit.
- iv) The Russian Federation has failed to investigate the poisoning of a Russian citizen by a chemical weapon and implausibly claims that any Russian investigation is dependent on first receiving information from other states.

The United Kingdom would be grateful if the Technical Secretariat could circulate a copy of this Note Verbale to all States Parties today, 18 October 2021, and make it available on the OPCW public website and Catalyst as an official document of EC-98.

The Permanent Representation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the OPCW avails itself of the opportunity to renew to the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW the assurances of its highest consideration.

British Embassy

The Hague

18 October 2021

