

**Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the
States Parties (CSP-26) to the Chemical Weapons Convention
The Hague, The Netherlands
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NGO Statement 9:

Next Steps in Strengthening Controls Over Novichok Agents and Precursors

Statement prepared by:¹

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Chairperson, Director General, Distinguished Delegates, CWC Coalition Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In November 2019, the 24th Conference of States Parties amended the list of chemicals subject to declaration and verification under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) by adding several chemicals associated with the Novichok family of nerve agents to Schedule 1. This unanimous decision by the States Parties to the CWC, the first ever modification to the treaty's scheduled chemicals, was an important achievement that strengthened the chemical weapon nonproliferation and disarmament regime. However, the coverage of Novichok agents by the CWC Schedules is not comprehensive and, due to the threat that these chemicals continue to pose, we urge that it be expanded. Schedule 1 of the CWC should be further amended to comprehensively cover all four known families of Novichok agents and precursors for this class of nerve agents should be added to the schedules as well.

Novichok agents, also known as fourth generation agents (FGA), are a class of nerve agents developed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War. These nerve agents emerged as a modern CW threat due to their use in the attempted assassinations of Sergey Skripal in April 2018, in Salisbury (UK), and Alexei Navalny in August 2020, in Omsk (Russia).

Novichok agents can be divided into four families of chemicals based on their chemical structures. The 2019 amendment to the CWC schedules provides comprehensive coverage of two of these families, partial coverage of a third family, and no coverage of a fourth family. This is particularly worrisome since the Novichok agent used in the attempted assassination of Navalny in August 2020 was likely a toxic chemical from that fourth family. Hence, the next logical step is for the States Parties to extend the coverage of Novichoks by the CWC Schedules by adopting a family-based approach for all four groups of Novichok agents.

¹ Please note: the following statement is a reflection of the views and opinions of the authors and the co-signers, and does not necessarily reflect the views of all organizations and individuals within the CWC Coalition.

Moreover, the CWC Schedules should be further amended to incorporate the precursors used to produce Novichok agents. Following the Skripal incident the Australia Group added 22 chemicals that could serve as precursors for the production of Novichok agents, including those added to Schedule 1 in 2019. We recommend that States Parties request that the OPCW director-general evaluate the feasibility of adding these Novichok precursors to the CWC schedules, as well as identify the proper schedule to which the precursors should be added, based on the extent of their legitimate uses. To do so, the Director-General should task the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) with conducting such a study. The Director-General should also ask States Parties to share relevant information with the SAB to support its study on the inclusion of Novichok precursors in the CWC schedules.

Expanding the CWC Schedules to include all four known families of Novichok nerve agents and the precursor chemicals used to produce them would strengthen the treaty and further advance its objective of excluding completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons.

Thank you for your attention, and I request that this statement be made part of the official CSP published proceedings.

Statement Co-Signers*:

Gen. (Ret.) Mansour Aburashid, *Chairman of Amman Center for Peace & Development*

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***Note:** endorsement by these individuals does not represent endorsement by the organization they are affiliated with.