



NEW ZEALAND
STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LYNDAL WALKER PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES

Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General and distinguishes delegates, Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa [Greetings, greetings, greetings to you all].

New Zealand wishes to warmly congratulate H.E Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway on being appointed as Chairperson of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. You can be assured of New Zealand's full support throughout your term. We express our sincere appreciation to H.E. Ambassador José Antonio Zabalgaitia Trejo of Mexico for his outstanding leadership as Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference.

We also wish to convey our thanks to Director-General Fernando Arias and the OPCW Technical Secretariat staff for their steadfast efforts to continue the critical work of the Organisation, even despite the challenges presented by the pandemic. The OPCW continues to have New Zealand's unwavering support and confidence.

With this in mind, New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to support Fernando Arias' reappointment as Director-General of the OPCW for another term. The mandate of the Organisation is a heavy load and with the ongoing incidents of chemical weapons use, it is vital that the organisation has trusted, proven leadership at its helm. New Zealand believes Director-General Arias provides this leadership. In line with the recent Executive Council decision, we call on all States Parties to support a consensus decision on the Director-General's reappointment.

We as States Parties have an opportunity to firmly demonstrate our commitment - and responsibility - to support the work of the OPCW by ensuring it has adequate resources to fulfil its mandate. New Zealand considers the proposed biennial Programme and Budget is reasonable and justified. It will not only provide the OPCW the financial support required to carry out its mandate and full programme of work, but will offer the Organisation a clearer sense of priorities for the years ahead.

We must continue to address the use of chemical weapons, and hold those who use such weapons to account. The victims of such egregious attacks deserve nothing less.

Following the proven use of chemical weapons by Syria and the subsequent suspension of its rights and privileges in the OPCW, New Zealand remains deeply concerned that Syria has not taken steps to come into compliance with the Convention. Syria's increasing lack of cooperation with the Technical Secretariat is troubling and impedes the Organisation's ability to carry out its important work to permanently eliminate chemical weapons under a verifiable process.

The Syrian Arab Republic's obligations under the Convention are clear. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully and in good faith with States Parties and the OPCW, and comply with all its obligations as a State Party to the Convention, including to declare and destroy its entire chemical weapons programme.

New Zealand remains gravely concerned by the poisoning of Mr Alexei Navalny. 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, and must be addressed. Despite the opportunity, the Russian Federation, on whose territory the attack took place, has not yet adequately addressed or investigated the circumstances of the incident. We 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 must ensure that such an attack cannot take place again.

To strengthen our understanding of the Convention, New Zealand wants to address the use of central nervous system (CNS)-acting chemicals in aerosolised form for law enforcement purposes. We remain concerned about the serious health and safety risks posed by these chemicals and the possibility of their deliberate misuse. New Zealand endorses the draft Decision on an Understanding Regarding the Aerosolized Use of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes which is currently before the Conference, and calls on States Parties to support its adoption.

Finally, New Zealand's places great importance on the Conference of the States Parties being open and inclusive. New Zealand regrets that certain States Parties continue to block accreditation of particular non-governmental organisations (NGO), thus impeding consensus on the need to include all civil society applicants. Civil society play an important role in global chemical weapons disarmament efforts and should be welcomed to attend. We thus call on States Parties to uphold the core principles of transparency and inclusivity in its approach to NGO accreditation.

While we continue to make important progress in some areas, there is much more work to be done. We call on all States Parties to work meaningfully and with urgency in pursuit of our collective goal to achieve a world without chemical weapons and to uphold the Convention and the global disarmament framework.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.