



UK Delegation to the OPCW

**Statement by Her Excellency Joanna Roper,
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of
Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Ninety-Ninth
Session of the Executive Council of the Organisation
for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.**

Madam Chair,

The Executive Council meets against the tragic backdrop of conflict in Ukraine. The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine was an unprovoked premeditated attack against a sovereign democratic state. The United Kingdom stands with Ukraine. We are united with our partners in condemning this clear breach of international law and the UN Charter.

The United Nations Security Council and General Assembly are rightly seized of this issue but this Organisation must also be vigilant. The UK remains concerned that Russia may use the pretext of chemical weapons to try to justify its illegal actions in Ukraine and we know only too well that Russia is also prepared to use chemical weapons against others. Any use of chemical weapons in the present conflict would be entirely unacceptable. Russia should know that the world's eyes are on them and that we see through their disinformation.

Friday 4 March marked the fourth anniversary of the Novichok nerve agent attack by Russian agents in Salisbury, as a result of which Dawn Sturgess tragically died. Russia has failed to answer the Article IX questions posed by 45 States Parties about the Novichok poisoning of Alexei Navalny. Russia is not fulfilling its obligations under the Convention.

Madam Chair,

The Russian Federation also works with Syria to undermine the global norm against chemical weapons use. The United Kingdom was grateful

to the Fact-Finding Mission for its two recent reports, which established reasonable grounds to believe that chemical weapons were used in Marea on 1 September 2015 and in Kafr Zeita on 1 October 2016. Those responsible must be held to account and Syria must come into compliance with the Convention.

Madam Chair,

Faced with these serious challenges, and as we look to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on 29 April, it is time to reflect on the way ahead. The UK looks forward to playing a constructive role in preparations for the Fifth Review Conference and to the appointment of the Chairs who will lead the process.

The Review Conference process will need to consider key developments in recent years and help set direction for the next twenty-five years.

Important issues to consider include:

- Firstly; ensuring the verification regime remains targeted and appropriate, providing assurance to us all;
- Secondly; enabling the Organisation to respond to emerging state and non-state threats and ensure compliance with the treaty;
- Thirdly; bolstering the OPCW's vital capacity building work, so that it meets the needs of States Parties, supports full implementation of the Convention and is monitored and evaluated effectively;

- And fourthly, supporting the Director-General and Technical Secretariat to continue to deliver on their mandate. We are committed to enabling the Secretariat to recruit and retain the best candidates that reflect the diverse world it serves.

Underpinning all of this we want to maximise the opportunities offered by the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology, a project we are very proud to support.

Madam Chair,

We note that recent monthly financial reports indicate payments of assessed contributions are significantly below where they were this time last year. We urge all States Parties to respect our collective obligations in that regard, pay their contributions in full and on time, and ensure the OPCW is able to properly plan and deliver on its mandate.

The United Kingdom welcomes the incremental changes made at this Council to allow more delegates to participate in person. As the pandemic-related rules ease further, we look forward to more face-to-face meetings while retaining some of the benefits of hybrid working. We recognise that COVID-related challenges remain in many areas but welcome the fact that most states are now able to host OPCW inspections and capacity building activities. We encourage all states to enable a full resumption of OPCW-related activities as soon as possible.

Thank you Madam Chair.