

Chemical terrorism

Thank you Madam Chair,

I would like to start by recognising the work of the Open-Ended Working Group, chaired by Ambassador Madonsela, on this topic.

As highlighted during the working group's recent discussions full national implementation of the Convention is a crucial part of the response to terrorist development and use of chemical weapons. In that regard we welcome the capacity building support offered by the OPCW to States Parties as well as the work of UNITAD and other international bodies.

The UK is very proud to provide voluntary contributions in support of Article X programmes which help states protect themselves from terrorism risks.

A number of delegations have referred to UNITAD today and the United Kingdom strongly supports the work of UNITAD in holding Da'esh to account for its crimes. As we said when UNITAD's work was discussed in the United Nations Security Council in December, we also welcome the significant efforts of the Government of Iraq to progress accountability for Da'esh crimes.

Any use of chemical weapons, including by terrorist groups, individuals or other non-state actors, is entirely unacceptable. We must hold them to account. The crimes described in UNITAD's seventh report are horrendous and underline the barbarity of Da'esh's behaviour. Before Russia vetoed the continuation of its mandate, the OPCW-UN Joint Investigatory Mechanism also found Da'esh responsible for chemical weapons crimes.

We also need to be wary of false equivalences. Terrorist use of chemical weapons is absolutely wrong. So is state-sponsored use of chemical weapons. So are instances of states attempting to blame non state actors for their own chemical weapons use.

We should not allow our condemnation of one actor overshadow our response to the use of chemical weapons by others. In the context of Syria, we hold both Da'esh and the Assad regime responsible for the use of chemical weapons that has been attributed to them.

Following successful efforts to degrade terrorist capabilities, we have not seen any confirmed Da'esh use of chemical weapons on Syria in recent years. This is a good thing. It is also consistent with the fact that Syria has provided no evidence to back its recent claims of 200+ allegations of terrorist chemical weapons activity. We should keep in mind that the Assad regime has been found by independent, impartial investigations to have used chemical weapons on multiple occasions.

Madame Chair,

We have heard some delegations propose a new stand-alone convention on chemical terrorism. We should keep in mind that there are robust multi-faceted tools within the existing international framework to combat the threat posed by chemical and biological weapons used by non-state actors. That includes UN Security Council Resolution 1540 and Resolution 2325 encouraging states to strengthen their implementation of 1540.

As others have mentioned this Council agreed a Decision at EC 86 on addressing the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons by non-state actors which provides a useful framework for further action.

Madam Chair,

The United Kingdom underscores our continuing support to prevention and response work in the field of chemical counter-terrorism. And we look forward to a constructive discussion on this topic in the approach to the Fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Thank you