



OPCW

Executive Council

Ninety-Ninth Session

8 – 10 March 2022

EC-99/NAT.40

8 March 2022

ENGLISH and RUSSIAN only

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR A. V. SHULGIN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO
THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

First of all, I would like to welcome the honourable Chairperson and assure her of our full support and willingness for constructive collaboration.

We are pleased to note the improvements in the global health and disease control situation and the gradual return to normal life. We believe this positive trend will allow us to get back into a regular work rhythm as early as July and conduct sessions of the policy-making organs in their full format.

This year marks 25 years since the entry-into-force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”). This is, without a doubt, an historic moment. Over the period of its existence, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has achieved impressive results: a total of approximately 99% (over 71.5 tonnes) of combined global stockpiles of chemical weapons under its control has been destroyed. Nearly five years ago, the OPCW confirmed the destruction of the substantial chemical arsenal inherited by the Russian Federation from the former Soviet Union. Incidentally, this was done ahead of the target deadline.

Unfortunately, however, it must be said that in spite of these colossal efforts, we are still far from our common end goal: ridding the world of chemical weapons. The only possessor State today—the United States of America—has for a quarter of a century been dragging out in every possible way the moment of the country’s chemical demilitarisation. Behind the partition of bombastic rhetoric, it turns out the story is altogether different.

It is known with absolute certainty that research and development of new types of toxic chemicals—including so-called “novichoks”—continue in the laboratories of a full range of Western countries. Moreover, this is done without any kind of control, and outside of the mechanisms provided for in the Convention. And this is not just idle talk about top secret intelligence, but actual facts, the confirmation of which can be easily found in open sources.



This type of attitude on the part of Washington and its Euro-Atlantic allies towards their obligations under the Convention, combined with attempts to reshape this international treaty in order to carry out their own geopolitical intentions, gives rise to the most serious concern. Being tight-knit members of block discipline, the countries in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) no longer inconvenience themselves with searching for a consensus; they do not listen to alternative opinions, but instead focus only on the lowest numerical advantage needed to force through the decisions they need with a vote.

We all know perfectly well what this kind of dictatorship has led to. The illegitimate decision to assign the OPCW with extrinsic attribution functions has transformed one of the most successful organisations ever in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation into a kangaroo court for undesirable governments. The team created within the Technical Secretariat for these purposes—the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT)—continues to put its stamp on dubious documents, the bias of which is clear to thoughtful delegations. It is difficult to imagine the objectivity of “investigations” that are conducted post factum—many years later, when the chain of events is nearly impossible to reconstruct. When conclusions are based on unconfirmed information from dubious sources and non-governmental organisations that are generously sponsored by a group of so-called “friends of Syria”. This approach speaks less about the desire to get to the truth, and more about the aims to make the results “fit” the design planned by NATO and the European Union to lay the blame on Damascus.

These types of work methods are adhered to, unfortunately, by the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) investigating the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We will not tire of repeating the long pressing need for the fundamental reform of the FFM, and bringing its terms of reference fully into line with the high standards of the Convention. However, no steps have been taken so far to rectify the situation. The Secretariat’s now customary unwillingness to confirm with documented proof the conclusions made in investigations conducted by the bodies it has established causes us great concern. The references to certain unknown “third-party expert evaluations” concealed by the Secretariat from States Parties to the Convention cannot be accepted as evidence. The “take-our-word-for-it” approach in such a sensitive matter is absolutely unacceptable. I emphasise: our comments are not aimed at discrediting the work of the Mission, but its objectivity and effectiveness. Otherwise, the credibility of the FFM’s conclusions will continue to be subject to serious doubt.

We welcome the willingness of Damascus to continue constructive collaboration with the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) examining the Syrian Arab Republic’s initial declaration under the Convention. To date, meticulous work has been conducted by both sides. The Syrian authorities have repeatedly been asked to take unprecedented measures of transparency that go far beyond the framework of the Convention regarding its former chemical military programme. And Damascus has in fact proven its dedication to comprehensive cooperation. In this regard, the situation concerning the regular deployment of the DAT to the Syrian Arab Republic has given rise to great concern. We see an artificially created political kerfuffle and attempts to skew the actual state of affairs in such a way so as to present the situation as if the responsibility for the suspension of the DAT’s work lies with the Syrian side. That is far from the truth. Syria is ready to receive the DAT, as it stated six months ago. We call on the management of the Secretariat to take that fact into consideration in its contacts with its Syrian colleagues.

We also believe that the planned negotiations between Director-General Arias and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Syria, Mr Mekdad, will help to more closely align positions and find a path towards resolving matters of dispute.

We have noted the conclusions of the seventh report of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh / the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD), which establishes that terrorist organisations active in the Middle East not only use toxic chemicals, but also have their own technological and manufacturing base used to synthesise military-grade toxic chemicals. We find it hard to understand why such an important aspect remains outside the focus on the OPCW's attention, even though the Secretariat was informed of the results of UNITAD's work back in September last year. Chemical terrorism has already become a reality that requires decisive, consistent, and urgent actions from all. In this regard, I would like to hear from the Director-General of the Secretariat as to what measures will be taken in connection with the information that is constantly received from the Syrian side, both by the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the United Nations Secretariat, about preparations being made for terrorist attacks and provocations involving the use of toxic chemicals and military grade toxic agents.

Among other pressing tasks is the implementation of Article XI of the Convention, which provides for the facilitation of international cooperation in the field of the peaceful use of "chemistry" and the removal of barriers to the economic and technical development of all countries. It is important that the resounding declarations in support of efforts under Article XI are reinforced with concrete results in practice.

The divide among the States Parties to the Convention in connection with the politicisation of the problem of the use of chemical weapons significantly reduces the effectiveness of the work of our Organisation. At the same time, at the threshold of the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we need more than ever in the past five years to unite efforts in order to try to bring a positive agenda to this event. Once again, we call upon the delegations to put a stop to their rhetoric of ultimatums and strive to search for compromise-based decisions and restore the OPCW's spirit of consensus.

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Ninety-Ninth Session of the Council and published on Catalyst and the OPCW website.

--- 0 ---