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**IRELAND**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR BRENDAN ROGERS  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRELAND TO THE OPCW  
AT THE NINETY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,  
Director-General,  
Distinguished delegates,

Ireland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and wishes to make the following statement in its national capacity.

I would like to thank the Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki of Morocco for his dedication and commitment during his successful Chairmanship of the Executive Council. I would also like to thank Vice-Chairperson, Ambassador Gudrun Lingner of Germany, for ensuring continuity and guiding the preparatory work for this session of the Executive Council. I can assure you of Ireland's full support in the work ahead.

I would also like to extend our support and gratitude to Director-General Fernando Arias and the Technical Secretariat for their continued dedication to the goals of the OPCW and for ensuring the essential work of the Organisation has continued despite the challenges it faces.

Before proceeding further, we must address the great sense of darkness which has fallen across the world as we witness the unfolding of the tragedy in Ukraine. Ireland condemns the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine. Russia's invasion is a gross violation of international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter. The statements of the Russian Federation regarding chemical components in Ukraine are unfounded. The Russian Federation's aggression threatens global security and the lives of many. Russia must be held accountable for its actions.

This year, we will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention"). This is a poignant moment for reflection, taking stock of the progress we have made and addressing the many challenges ahead. The marked increase in the use of chemical weapons in recent years is completely contrary to the aims of the Convention. Any use of chemical weapons is an affront to international law on which we all depend for our security and well-being. Ireland, as a State Party to the Convention and, an elected Member of the United Nations Security Council, will continue in our efforts to maintain a clear-headed focus against chemical weapons and in the fight against impunity.



We thank the OPCW Technical Secretariat for its work in addressing chemical weapons in Syria. We fully support the conclusions of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) published in April 2021, and strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force. We take note of the recent findings that there are reasonable grounds to believe that chemical weapons were used in Marea in September 2015 and Kafr Zeita in October 2016 and welcome the monthly reporting of the Director-General to the United Nations Security Council. These reports and the consistent work of the OPCW teams demonstrate the integrity, professionalism, and impartiality of the Organisation in its work in Syria.

Ireland remains dismayed by the clear pattern of visa delays and denials to the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) by Syria. This hampers the work of the DAT and is contrary to Syria's obligations under the Convention and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118. It should be clear to all States Parties that voting against, or disagreeing with, a decision adopted by Members of this Organisation does not create an exception to obligations under the Convention or the United Nations Charter. The fact that Syria's declaration still cannot be considered accurate or complete by the Technical Secretariat is evidence of Syria's failure to respect its international obligations.

The Technical Secretariat has demonstrated ongoing flexibility and patience in seeking to resolve outstanding issues and we hope that Syria will respond to this willingness, including by finalising arrangements for the proposed meeting between the Director-General and Foreign Minister Mekdad.

Ireland unequivocally condemns the attempted assassination of Mr Alexi Navalny in August 2020 with a novichok nerve agent. We fully align with the European Union statement in this regard delivered at this session of the Executive Council. The use of a chemical weapon against Mr Navalny was in complete disregard for the obligations we have all committed to uphold under the Convention. We again call on the Russian Federation to engage actively with the Technical Secretariat and to heed international requests to investigate thoroughly and transparently this assassination attempt.

The German initiative on Executive Council business continuity is an appropriate and welcome response to the pandemic-related challenges we have experienced over the past two years. We are pleased to co-sponsor this initiative, aiming to providing guidance for emergency circumstances in which in-person meetings are not possible—we are all acutely aware of how necessary this can be. We thank Germany for their continued efforts in this regard and strongly encourage all Executive Council members to join the emerging consensus and support the adoption of this decision in time.

We thank the co-facilitators of the governance facilitation and their work to amend the tenure policy of the Organisation. This is an essential component for providing the Director-General with the flexibility necessary for maintaining key expertise and knowledge management to ensure the effective functioning of the Organisation.

As we mark International Women's Day, Ireland welcomes the commitment of the Director-General to gender balance and of ensuring the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women at all levels of the Organisation. We look forward to the implementation of the results of the gender audit and reiterate that gender equality and the empowerment of women across all areas of the Organisation's work must remain a priority.

The Fifth Review Conference in May 2023 offers an opportunity to secure the continued relevance and effective operation of the Convention and to ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated. Therefore, Ireland will contribute constructively to the work of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) for a robust and consensus-based outcome at the Review Conference.

Ireland is pleased to be joining the Executive Council in May 2022 and during our tenure, we will continue in our efforts to ensure accountability and uphold the integrity of the Convention.

The OPCW's role remains essential. We call on all States Parties to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time to ensure the Organisation has the resources to fulfil its mandate. We appeal to all States Parties to unite and intensify efforts to uphold the global norm against chemical weapons.

I would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document and to post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you.

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