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**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  
UNDER AGENDA ITEM 10**

Madam Chairperson,

The use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstances, is absolutely unacceptable. This inviolable standard of international law is not questioned by any of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. It must serve as the basis for all the work of our Organisation; however, unfortunately, as the events of recent years have shown, this is not always the case.

The Russian Federation has consistently made efforts in The Hague, as well as in New York and Geneva, to mobilise international efforts in the fight against one of the most underestimated threats of our time: chemical terrorism. Starting in 2014, we repeatedly attempted to initiate the adoption of collective measures, both at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations Security Council, in response to the uptick in the evidence that terrorist groups active in the Middle East—primarily Da’esh—were gaining access to military-grade toxic chemicals. In 2015, we submitted to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva potential components of a future international convention on the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism.

In spite of common sense, not only were all these steps not supported by the Western group of countries, but they were met with staunch rejection. Our colleagues did not want to allow even the thought that the OPCW might engage in something other than Syrian chemicals. This all brings one to wonder if the problem of chemical weapons for them is merely a convenient tool of political pressure, and that the States Parties ought not to let their attention be diverted away from the artificially created Syrian chemical dossier.

And so, it is now time to reap the fruits of this collective irresponsibility. On 24 November 2021, the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD), which was established by the Security Council, released its seventh report. This structure was not only able to identify approximately 3,000 victims of and witnesses to acts of chemical terrorism, but it was also able to establish that Da’esh has its own military chemical programme, including research activities, production, and chemical weapons use preparation programmes. I do hope I do not need to explain that this terrorist “international collective” includes citizens from a wide variety of countries.



I will note that the wide spread of the chemical terrorism phenomenon in the Middle East did not just happen. After foreign interventions that provoked either the collapse of a nation, or an all-out war, former military personnel also ended up among the ranks of terrorist groups; these included army experts involved in national military chemical programmes. This is exactly why it would be extremely short-sighted to just wave this problem away.

In this regard, it was expected that the Technical Secretariat—which had been informed by UNITAD back on 9 September 2021 of the emerging facts of the development and use of chemical weapons by ISIL—would immediately report this to the States Parties, the interests of which it represents through the OPCW in line with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact. But unfortunately, this information was not addressed during the Ninety-Eighth Session of the Executive Council, or the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, or even in the annual Note on the OPCW's contribution to anti-terrorist efforts.

If the very fact that Da'esh has a fully-fledged military chemical programme—when it has carried out terrorist activity in the Middle East, Africa, Central and South Asia, and the northern Caucasus and has cells in Southeast Asia—is not reason enough to inform the delegations and hold discussions at the relevant international organisations, then this kind of approach is truly cause for serious concern. It is also worth bearing in mind that sooner or later, the individuals involved in terrorist activity with accumulated experience in developing, producing, and using chemical weapons will return from the conflict zones in the Middle East back to their home countries or search for a “safe haven” in other regions.

We urge the States Parties, as well as the Secretariat, not to ignore these kinds of facts. We believe that, even at this session, the Secretariat is capable of holding a detailed briefing under agenda item 10 of the Ninety-Ninth Session of the Council on this matter, and in future of informing the States Parties promptly and in depth of its “activities” as a vice-chairperson on the working group on emerging threats.

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

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