



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

Ninety-Seventh Session  
6 – 8 July 2021

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ENGLISH only

**UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF  
GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE OPCW  
AT THE NINETY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL  
UNDER AGENDA ITEM 6(F)  
ADDRESSING THE THREAT FROM CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE**

Mr Chair,

Later this week, on 8 July, it will be the three-year anniversary of the death of Dawn Sturgess. She died a horrible death, poisoned by a nerve agent, first researched in the former Soviet Union during the 1980s as part of a programme to develop a fourth generation of nerve agents, known as novichok.

The Russian Federation developed novichok nerve agents even as the prohibition on chemical weapons was enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”). Many details of Russia’s secret novichok programme were revealed by the chemist Vil Mirzayanov in the early 1990s. Mr Mirzayanov was charged with revealing State secrets.

Next month will see the one-year anniversary of another attack, again using a novichok nerve agent. On 20 August 2020, Alexei Navalny was poisoned on Russian Federation territory. Fortunately, he survived. OPCW designated laboratories analysed samples taken from Alexei Navalny. They confirmed the presence of a nerve agent from the novichok group.

The basic facts of the case are established. Russia has not explained to this Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) who was responsible; nor what steps the Russian Federation has taken to identify them and to hold them to account. Article VII of the Convention sets out clearly the legal obligations of all States Parties to implement and uphold the provisions of the Convention on their territory.

States Parties have made clear the widespread concern over this incident and its implications. The Russian Federation’s request for a technical assistance visit (TAV) last October appears to be in suspended animation. The Russian Federation has refused to follow standard practice for a TAV. Yet it insists that the request has not been withdrawn. When will the Council see progress?

The Russian Federation’s actions are compatible neither with its obligations as a State Party to the Convention; nor as a member of the Council, charged with promoting compliance with the Convention. We will continue to press the Russian Federation for a full explanation of what



happened to Mr Navalny. We call on the Russian Federation to declare all aspects of its novichok programme, and to work with the OPCW to destroy all chemical weapons in its possession transparently and entirely.

Thank you.

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