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IRELAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR BRENDAN ROGERS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRELAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE 100TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr 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 begin by welcoming Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Ziad M.D. Al Atiyah of Saudi Arabia to his new role as Chairperson of the Executive Council. I can assure you of Ireland's full support in the work ahead. I would also like to thank the Vice-Chairpersons of Bulgaria, El Salvador, Italy and Nigeria, for ensuring continuity and guiding the preparatory work for this session of the Executive Council.

I would also like to extend our support and gratitude to Director-General Fernando Arias and the staff in the Technical Secretariat (the Secretariat) for ensuring the essential work of the Organisation has continued despite the challenges it faces.

This year, we mark 25 years since the entry-into-force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention). In that time, we have witnessed considerable progress in our collective endeavour to rid the world of chemical weapons, with 99% of declared chemical weapons stockpiles now verifiably destroyed. As we move closer to the total elimination of chemical weapons, we must not become complacent about continuing and emerging threats and challenges.

Today marks the first of Ireland's two-year tenure on the Executive Council. We join this Council at a time of heightened international tension, when respect for the norm against chemical weapons use is under threat. Ireland reiterates our condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine. Russia's illegal invasion is a gross violation of international law and contrary to the United Nations Charter. We call on Russia to respect its obligations under international law, including those of the Convention.

Ireland is particularly concerned about the campaign of disinformation emanating from the Russian Federation in relation to supposed chemical weapons development or use by Ukraine, the United States of America, and others. We will continue to reject these baseless claims,



which are made by Russia in an effort to paint itself as the victim in the face of its own unjustifiable and unlawful military aggression. We reiterate that Ukraine is in full compliance with the Convention and is a responsible State Party to the Convention. Russia's disinformation efforts in this area risk undermining essential multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation instruments upon which our collective security depends. These unfounded claims must cease.

Furthermore, Russia's continuing attacks on the integrity and credibility of the OPCW Secretariat is unacceptable. The Secretariat is an impartial and independent body, which does not seek or receive instructions from any government or external source. The Secretariat acts with the highest international standards through the monitoring of any breaches of the Convention and assisting States Parties when needed.

Ireland fully stands behind the Secretariat and rejects any questions of its legitimacy from any State Party. Such deeply cynical and harmful actions will serve only to undermine the Convention, and further threaten international peace and security.

The re-emergence of chemical weapons use is one of the most urgent threats to international peace and security and has to be dealt with firmly and collectively. Ireland fully aligns itself with the position of the European Union in relation to the attempted assassination of Mr Alexei Navalny with a chemical nerve agent from the novichok group in Russia in August 2020. We once again call on Russia to provide a credible explanation to the questions posed to them through the Article IX initiative in October 2021, and to cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation.

Ireland is resolute that there can be no impunity for any individuals involved in the use of chemical weapons. We will continue to work with the OPCW and international community to ensure accountability.

Mr Chairperson, Ireland would like to thank the Secretariat for its on-going work to address the Syrian chemical weapons file and for its continuous commitment to this issue. Since 2013, the Secretariat has worked tirelessly to close the gaps in relation to Syria's initial declaration, and to investigate chemical weapons use on their territory.

At the same time, what we have seen from Syria is a pattern of obstruction and efforts to frustrate the work of the Secretariat. Ireland stands fully behind the Organisation in their continuing efforts to close this case file and calls on the Syrian Arab Republic to comply with the Convention, and constructively engage with the Secretariat.

Ireland reiterates its strong support for the continuing important work of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). The members of the IIT continue to demonstrate tremendous resilience and professionalism. In our view, the findings of the IIT represent an important step in efforts to end impunity for the use of chemical weapons, and we look forward to receiving further reports.

Closing the Syrian case file, and investigating any use of chemical weapons, must remain a priority of the Organisation and the international community.

The upcoming Fifth Review Conference will be an important milestone for the Organisation, providing an opportunity to take stock of our achievements so far and to look to future opportunities for the Organisation. We would like to thank Ambassador Kuusing of Estonia for

his dedication and guidance as Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference. Ireland welcomes the initiative to work on the basis of a thematic approach in the OEWG sessions and we believe that this framework will better enable us to achieve an optimal outcome.

During our preparations for the Fifth Review Conference, Ireland will prioritise the issue of gender; we hope to engage with other States Parties and to build strong cross-regional support for this topic. Ireland is committed to achieving the full implementation of gender mainstreaming in all aspects of the Secretariat's work and we look forward to timely updates from the Secretariat on the implementation of the recommendations of the gender and diversity audit.

Ireland is pleased to co-sponsor Germany's initiative on Executive Council business continuity. We sincerely thank Germany for leading a transparent, open and constructive process with the aim of achieving a decision based on consensus. We strongly believe that this is an essential decision that will help us overcome some of the challenges we have faced, and may continue to face, due to extraordinary circumstances.

The international community is at a critical juncture in our efforts to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. A failure to ensure effective accountability risks emboldening those who dare to use them.

The Convention is a key instrument of the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. The ban on the use of chemical weapons under the Convention is absolute. There are no exemptions, no exceptions. However, the existence of the Convention itself does not guarantee security. The strength of the Convention and norm against the use of chemical weapons is fully dependant on the actions and commitment of States Parties. Now more than ever, it is essential that we engage multilaterally and collectively face these challenges.

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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