



CANADA

JOINT STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE DELEGATIONS OF AUSTRALIA, CANADA, AND NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW AT THE 100TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL UNDER AGENDA ITEM 6(F)

Our three countries condemn Russia's continuing illegal and unjustified invasion of Ukraine. We are deeply concerned about the credible allegations that Russian forces have committed widespread violations of international law, including war crimes.

Let us be clear: Russia will be held to account for the violations of international law that it commits, including if it were to deploy chemical weapons in Ukraine. The use of chemical weapons, especially as part of a false-flag operation, constitutes a violation of the fundamental principles of the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention"). We have no reason to believe that Ukraine, a State Party in good standing that has never had a chemical weapons programme nor used such weapons, would intend to use chemical weapons, and there is no credible evidence to make such an assertion.

We condemn Russia's bombing of chemical production facilities in Ukraine, carried out in lockstep with its disinformation campaign, conveyed through a whole host of channels including diplomatic forums and social media. To sow doubt, to spread falsehoods, to deny facts, and to make false counter-accusations are all tactics that, for years, Russia has used at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The many unfounded allegations of use of chemical weapons undermine the Convention, which 193 States Parties have ratified.

The 2020 poisoning of Alexei Navalny with a novichok military-grade nerve agent was mired in a similar disinformation campaign. The fact that no one knows whether Russia has carried out an investigation into a chemical attack on its own territory or what Russia will even do to prevent any future use of chemical weapons on its territory, is deeply alarming. Beyond that, it has refused to cooperate and avoided answering fundamental questions about the circumstances surrounding the attack against Mr Navalny, including questions raised by 45 States Parties under paragraph 2 of Article IX of the Convention in October 2021.

What strikes perhaps directly at the core of our collective work are Russia's increasing and unjustified assaults on the reputation of OPCW staff and the Director-General's leadership. Whenever it is threatened by the work of the Technical Secretariat ("the Secretariat") sanctioned by the States Parties, Russia attempts to cast doubt on the institution itself. We condemn Russia's recent assault on the impartiality of the OPCW in its note verbale No. 29, in which it suggests that the OPCW was colluding with Ukraine against Russia. We would point out that we wholeheartedly support the Director-General and the Secretariat staff, and that we



are grateful for the impartiality, integrity, expertise, and professionalism they bring to the essential work that we are carrying out to protect the world from chemical weapons.

We call on Russia to stop its attacks on the OPCW. We call on Russia to stick to the facts. We continue to call on Russia to respect and to abide by international law and—especially relevant to our discussions today—to ensure that it complies with its obligations under the Convention.

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