



**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SUSANNAH GORDON PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW AT THE 27th MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

28 November to 2 December 2022

Chair, Mr Director-General, and distinguished delegates,

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa [Greetings, greetings, greetings to you all],

Aotearoa New Zealand joins in acknowledgement of it being the twenty-seventh meeting of the Conference of the States Parties of the Chemical Weapons Convention. There is much to reflect on as we continue our important work together this week.

Aotearoa New Zealand wishes to convey its sincere appreciation to Director-General Ambassador Fernando Arias and the OPCW Technical Secretariat. Despite these challenging times, the Secretariat has on all occasions remained highly professional, competent, and impartial in its efforts to deliver on its mandate. The Secretariat continues to enjoy New Zealand's full and unwavering confidence and support.

New Zealand also wishes to commend the Secretariat for its work to progress the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology ("the ChemTech Centre"), and we look forward to its opening in 2023. We are pleased that the ChemTech Centre will enable the Secretariat to further enhance its international cooperation, detection capabilities, and response measures. In our own region, the Pacific, we will warmly welcome the ChemTech Centre's support in the field of regional capacity-building.

In that regard, we recall with gratitude Director-General Ambassador Fernando Arias' participation in the *Subregional Forum on the Chemical Weapons Convention: Enhancing National Implementation and Regional Cooperation in the Pacific Region* that was held in Brisbane, Australia, in October 2022. We welcome the Secretariat, and wider OPCW's emphasis on regional initiatives, as these will help ensure that assistance and cooperation is meaningful and actionable.

Ridding the world of chemical weapons is a collective endeavour, and we should work towards achieving it in an inclusive way. Aotearoa New Zealand encourages all efforts by the Secretariat to attract the best talent from all backgrounds by mainstreaming gender and diversity considerations into its personnel policies.

The vast majority of States Parties also recognise the importance of facilitating meaningful engagement and participation by non-government organisations (NGOs). We reiterate Aotearoa New Zealand's view that meetings of the OPCW, including the Conference of the States Parties and Review Conferences, should be open and inclusive events. We need the expertise and perspectives of NGOs in the room. Operating in a vacuum will not move us forward. We regret that certain States Parties are continuing to block the accreditation of particular civil society organisations who have a proven record of working on issues relevant to the work of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We urge all States Parties to uphold the goal of inclusion and transparency in the accreditation process for NGOs.



Ensuring that our agreed OPCW Programme of work can be delivered is of critical importance. Aotearoa New Zealand considers that the technical update to the Biennial Programme and Budget of the OPCW 2022 – 2023 is reasonable and justified. We call on others to support the decision. We are pleased to demonstrate our commitment to the OPCW by transmitting our assessed contributions to the Budget on time and in full. While we understand that many national budgets are under pressure, we urge all States Parties to do likewise. Together, we must ensure that the OPCW has the financial means to effectively fulfil its role.

Aotearoa New Zealand recognises that the OPCW's core budget is insufficient to cover some additional programmes or expenses. We note that the OPCW's physical and cyber security has required reinforcement. To assist in this endeavour, New Zealand was pleased to make a voluntary contribution in 2022 of NZD 80,000 to the OPCW Trust Fund for Security and Business Continuity. We call on other States Parties who are in a position to contribute to do so.

Chair, while we have made strides in some areas, we are clear that much important work remains ahead of us.

Along with other States Parties, we are pleased to join together this week to focus our collective efforts on excluding the possibility of use of chemical weapons, and on promoting compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. However, we recognise that the Convention's objectives can only begin to be fully attained once universality is achieved. Accordingly, we urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, and South Sudan to sign and ratify the Convention, and Israel to ratify it.

Compliance with the Convention by the States Parties is of fundamental importance. Regretfully, over recent years we have witnessed a series of gross violations of the Treaty, additional threats of violation, as well as disinformation campaigns that have sought to undermine both the framework of the Convention and the Secretariat created to support it. New Zealand unequivocally condemns these developments.

The Syrian Arab Republic is found to have used chemical weapons on repeated occasions. This represents a serious violation of the Convention, and Syria cannot escape accountability for its use. We wish to highlight that Syria's use of chemical weapons has been confirmed as a result of extensive and impartial expert investigations, and Aotearoa New Zealand is clear that we cannot allow disinformation campaigns by some States Parties to undermine the credibility of the OPCW's work. As we have done previously, we call on the Syrian Arab Republic to come into compliance with the Convention, to declare and destroy the entirety of its chemical weapons programme, and to cooperate fully and in good faith with the Secretariat and other member states.

Chair, this is also the first time we have met as the Conference of the States Parties since Russia's unprovoked and unjustified attack against Ukraine, which represents a serious breach of international law. We call on Russia to cease all military operations in Ukraine, and to immediately and permanently withdraw. We are deeply concerned by Russian military attacks in the vicinity of civil chemical facilities in Ukraine, as well as by malicious Russian disinformation campaigns falsely alleging that Ukraine or other states are preparing to use chemical agents in Ukraine.



Aotearoa New Zealand calls on the Secretariat to continue to closely monitor the situation in Ukraine. We were pleased to make a voluntary contribution in 2022 of NZD 100,000 to support the OPCW Trust Fund for the Implementation of Article X, with priority placed on providing assistance and protection to Ukraine as related to the threat or use of chemical weapons.

In the same vein, Aotearoa New Zealand is deeply concerned that the Russian Federation has not yet responded to questions from 45 States Parties in October 2021 over the poisoning of Mr Alexey Navalny in 2020 with a nerve agent from the Novichok family. We urge Russia to cooperate in good faith. No State Party should seek to undermine the prohibitions and norms against chemical weapons use.

Aotearoa New Zealand calls on States Parties to be united in our resolve to eliminate chemical weapons, and to prevent their re-emergence. Let us work together to build a safer and more just future. We look forward to discussing how best to strengthen and safeguard the Convention during the Fifth Review Conference in 2023. It is an opportunity we can take as a collective to review the operations of the Convention and set a strategic direction for the OPCW for the next five years and beyond. New Zealand expresses full confidence in the capable leadership of Ambassador Kuusing of Estonia who has allowed for an open process in the Open Ended Working Group that enables all States Parties to be heard.

Thank you Chair.

We ask that this statement be made an official-series document and published on Catalyst and the public website of the OPCW.