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**AUSTRALIA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MATTHEW NEUHAUS  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE OPCW  
AT THE 101ST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

First of all, I would like to commend the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat for their significant contributions in progressing the work of the OPCW in a challenging global environment. Australia strongly supports the OPCW's impartial and independent work to end the use of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

Australia condemns in the strongest possible terms the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine. We deplore the Russian Federation's bombing of chemical production facilities in Ukraine. We are appalled by the Russian Federation's disinformation campaign aimed at spreading false allegations of chemical weapons use in Ukraine. We urge the Russian Federation to cease its unilateral, illegal, and immoral aggression in Ukraine and respect and abide by international law, including the Charter of the United Nations.

Australia stands with Ukraine. This year, we contributed AUD \$200,000 to the OPCW Trust Fund for the Implementation of Article X (assistance and protection against chemical weapons) of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter "the Convention) for the provision of assistance and protection to Ukraine in the event of the use or threat of use of chemical weapons. We call on States Parties to support Ukraine through voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund.

The use of chemical weapons by any country is unacceptable. We note the Syrian Arab Republic's ongoing non-compliance with its obligations under the Convention, which it signed in 2013. It is incumbent upon the Syrian Arab Republic to bring itself into compliance with the Convention without delay. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the OPCW, including the Investigation and Identification Team. Australia is grateful for the Technical Secretariat's tireless efforts to resolve outstanding issues regarding the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons programme.

Australia also remains deeply concerned by the poisoning of Alexei Navalny in 2020 using a Novichok nerve agent. The Russian Federation has failed to answer the Article XI questions posed by 45 States Parties about the circumstances surrounding the attack on Mr Navalny. Article VII of the Convention obliges the Russian Federation to criminalise, investigate and punish suspected uses of chemical weapons on its territory. We call on the Russian Federation to provide a full account of the incident and to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat.



With the destruction of the last declared chemical weapons stockpiles nearing completion, it is timely to look to the future and see how the OPCW can remain best placed to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. The OPCW's new Centre for Chemistry and Technology ("ChemTech Centre") will enable the OPCW to keep pace with developments in science and technology and respond to new chemical weapons threats. Australia is very proud to support the ChemTech Centre through its contribution of an additional AUD \$150,000 this year.

Australia stands ready to work with the Director-General and Technical Secretariat on the tenure policy. Upholding the prohibition against the use of chemical weapons is dependent on the retention of expertise and the preservation of a skilled workforce. Due regard should be given to geographic and gender balance.

Australia is continuing to support Convention implementation in our region. As part of the OPCW partnership programme, we held constructive discussions between the Australian and Malaysian agencies in Malaysia in August on issues such as Convention implementation, legislation, and chemical safety and security.

We look forward to welcoming the Director-General to Australia as part of the Subregional Forum on National Implementation of the Convention for Pacific Island States, to be held in Brisbane from 17 to 20 October 2022.

I would like to thank the Technical Secretariat and the budget co-facilitators for their hard work in the lead up to this Executive Council session to deliver the best possible mid-biennium budget for the OPCW. The draft mid-biennium revised Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2023 is fair and reasonable. Australia calls on all Council members to support the budget and the important work of the OPCW and its staff.

Under the able leadership of the Ambassador of Estonia, Australia looks forward to working cooperatively with States Parties as part of the Open-Ended Working Group process for the Fifth Review Conference. We welcome the open, transparent, and inclusive nature of the process and commend the OPCW and States Parties for their constructive input to date.

Australia remains committed to upholding the global prohibition against any use of chemical weapons and stands ready to assist the OPCW in its work to prevent chemical weapons use.

Thank you.

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