



OPCW

Executive Council

101st Session
4 – 6 October 2022

EC-101/NAT.51
4 October 2022
ENGLISH only

IRELAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR BRENDAN ROGERS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRELAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE 101ST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

Ireland supports the statement made by the Ambassador of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union. I will make the following statement in a national capacity.

At the outset, I would like to thank Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Ziad Al Atiyah and the fellow Vice-Chairpersons of the Executive Council for their important role in guiding the preparatory work for this session. I would also like to extend our support and gratitude to Director-General Fernando Arias and the staff in the Technical Secretariat for continuing to carry out the Organisation's critical mandate in a professional and impartial manner.

We are meeting once again against the backdrop of Russia's continuing illegal act of aggression, the invasion of Ukraine. This aggression by Russia, against an independent democratic State and member of the United Nations, is a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and a grave breach of international law. Russia will be held accountable for its violations of international law, including if it were to deploy chemical weapons in Ukraine. As we have done since Russia commenced its illegal and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, we urge the Russian Federation to immediately cease hostilities, unconditionally withdraw from the entire territory of Ukraine, and to refrain from further threats and the use of force of any kind against Ukraine.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is the antithesis of the principles of the United Nations Charter. It is a grave violation of international law. It is an attempt to change internationally recognised borders by use of force.

Ireland remains very concerned about the possibility of the use of chemicals against the population of Ukraine. We welcome that the OPCW Technical Secretariat is continuing to monitor the situation, particularly around declared chemical industrial sites in Ukraine. Any use of chemical weapons, including as part of a false flag operation, is a clear violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.



In recent months, we have also witnessed a sustained, elaborate, and manipulative disinformation campaign targeted at Ukraine by the Russian Federation at the OPCW and at other multilateral fora. We categorically denounce this malicious and completely unfounded disinformation campaign. Ukraine is a responsible member of the Chemical Weapons Convention and in full compliance with the Convention and these unsubstantiated accusations must cease.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time we have encountered challenges with the Russian Federation at this Organisation. Ireland fully aligns ourselves with the position of the EU relating to the attempted assassination of Mr Alexei Navalny in August 2020. We once again call on Russia to provide a credible explanation to the questions posed through the Article IX initiative and cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation. We reiterate that the use of chemical weapons is an affront to the global rules and norms that we collectively committed to uphold. We cannot allow the perpetrators to escape accountability.

Complete and accurate declarations go to the heart of any verification effort. After almost a decade's work, the Technical Secretariat is clear that the 2013 initial declaration of Syria still cannot be considered accurate or complete. This is due to the gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies in Syria's accounts that remain unresolved. Ireland is grateful to the Technical Secretariat for the briefing on Syria on 28 September 2022. What is clear from this briefing—and the monthly reporting—is that Syria is continuing to disregard its obligations under the Convention. This cannot continue. We remain dismayed by the clear pattern of visa delays and denials restricting the effectiveness of the OPCW's work on the ground.

While we welcome the initiative and flexibility demonstrated by the Secretariat to continue the tasks of the Declaration Assessment Team via correspondence, this is no substitute for the presence of the DAT on the ground. It is imperative that Syria issues visas for Technical Secretariat staff as required by the United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 and the Convention without delay.

Ireland commends the work of the Technical Secretariat on all aspects of the Syrian chemical weapons programme and was pleased to make another voluntary contribution of EUR 100,000 to the trust fund for Syria missions last month in order to support this work.

The next few years are of great importance for the Organisation. Even though 99% of all declared chemical weapons have now been verifiably destroyed, the threat of chemical weapons still remains very real. The international community is at a critical juncture in our efforts to prevent the widespread re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons and it is essential that the Organisation remains ready to deal with potential future challenges. The new Centre for Chemistry and Technology will be a vital resource for the Organisation in responding to future chemical threats and providing capacity-building training for Member States and we are pleased with the progress towards the realisation of the new Centre to date.

The Fifth Review Conference next year will provide an opportunity to take stock of the significant successes that the Organisation has achieved so far, alongside outlining a vision for how the Organisation can be strengthened for the future. In this context, I would like to pay my sincere gratitude to Ambassador Lauri Kuusing for his guidance and stewardship in the preparation of the Open-Ended Working Group meetings to date.

Ireland, once again, recognises the efforts that the Technical Secretariat and the Director-General are making to advance gender equality within the Organisation. This is a vital objective and one which requires sustained attention and review. We encourage the Secretariat to keep us informed on progress in addressing the results of the gender audit. As an international gender champion, I am personally committed to advancing this issue both within and outside of the OPCW.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is a key instrument of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. It requires a predictable and solid financial base to achieve a world free of chemical weapons. Against a backdrop of economic uncertainty and unforeseen levels of inflation, the revised proposed Programme and Budget for 2023 is a reasonable and proportionate response. The use of the 2020 budget surplus will enable the OPCW to continue its vital work without increasing assessed contributions this year. We encourage all States to support the budget proposal as presented.

While we continue to make important progress in some areas, there is much more work to be done. Ireland remains fully committed to international law, the fight against impunity, and the pursuit of justice and accountability. These are essential components of sustainable peace, security, and reconciliation. Impunity deprives victims of justice, emboldens perpetrators, and undermines the Convention itself. We appeal to all States Parties to unite and intensify efforts to uphold the global norm against chemical weapons and ensure a chemical weapon is never used again.

I would kindly ask to consider this statement as an official document and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you.

--- 0 ---