

Mr Chairperson,  
Director-General,  
Distinguished delegates,

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

Chair, congratulations on your appointment as Chairperson of the Executive Council. You can count on Aotearoa New Zealand's cooperation and support for the week ahead.

As always, we also convey our appreciation to Director-General Fernando Arias and the OPCW Technical Secretariat. The Secretariat has on all occasions remained highly professional, competent, and impartial in delivering its mandate. Their efforts, and those of most states parties ensures the OPCW remains a credible part of the international disarmament framework. We would also like to acknowledge the important contribution of industry, academia and civil society in supporting and advancing this work.

While all meetings of the Executive Council are important, this is the first following the Fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention. For Aotearoa New Zealand, we see this meeting and those to come as important moments to capitalise on the positive and productive momentum of the Review Conference preparatory period and Conference itself.

Alongside 74 other states parties on the conclusion of the Review Conference, Aotearoa New Zealand expressed in a joint statement our determination to continue to work on the actionable matters set out in the draft provisional text and our commitment to working constructively with all delegations to achieve tangible results on matters of mutual concern. We stand by this.

We have progress to make on furthering diversity and inclusion in the Organisation, both in the Technical Secretariat, and in meetings of states parties. We believe it is important that the Organisation has the right capability now and in the future to carry out its mandate, including through a flexible tenure policy and geographical diversity. A strong verification regime is also important to ensuring accountability and we want to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose.

This year, States parties received the Investigation and Identification Team's (IIT) third report which confirms the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic in the attack in Douma, Syria, on 7 April 2018. This was not the first time the Syrian Arab Republic has been found to have used chemical weapons and all instances represent a serious violation of the Convention.

Aotearoa New Zealand continues to concretely support the Organisation's missions in Syria, including through an additional voluntary contribution of over €84,000 to the Trust Fund for Syria earlier this year. The contribution will be used towards the full elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme and clarification of facts related to the use of chemical weapons in Syria, in accordance with the relevant decisions of the policy-making organs of the OPCW.

As Aotearoa New Zealand has 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 States Parties.

We as States Parties have an opportunity to firmly demonstrate our commitment - and responsibility - to support the work of the OPCW as a whole by ensuring it has adequate resources to fulfil its mandate. New Zealand will be advocating for a biennial Programme and Budget that is reasonable and justified. We want to ensure that it not only provides the OPCW the financial support required to carry out its mandate and full programme of work, but will also offer the Technical Secretariat a clear sense of priorities for the years ahead.

Aotearoa New Zealand condemns, unequivocally, the unprovoked and unjustified attack by Russia on Ukraine. We remain very concerned about the possibility of the weaponisation of chemicals against the civilian population of Ukraine. In a chorus of voices, Aotearoa New Zealand calls on Russia to cease all military operations in Ukraine and to immediately and permanently withdraw.

Thank you Mr Chairperson.

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