

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR BONNIE JENKINS
UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ARMS CONTROL AND
INTERNATIONAL SECURITY
ONE HUNDRED AND THIRD SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mr. Chairperson,
Director General,
Distinguished Ambassadors and Delegates,

It is my honor to announce that the United States has completed the destruction of its chemical weapons (CW) stockpile. We are done! This is an important moment not only for the United States, but also for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), its States Parties, and the entire world. It is a milestone that exemplifies the importance of international cooperation and transparency in arms control. As States Parties, we have worked together in good faith to ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. In so doing, we have made substantial progress towards freeing the world of chemical weapons.

The United States spent over \$31 billion dollars to achieve its destruction in a manner that mitigated the effects on the environment, with frequent and active engagement with local communities, and while ensuring the safety of the thousands of dedicated Americans who every day put their lives on the line to carry out this important task.

Of course, we achieved this milestone working collaboratively with the Technical Secretariat whose valuable expertise ensured on-site verification in an uninterrupted manner through the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the complete destruction of the U.S. stockpile, the United States is proud to, once again, reiterate its commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Not only has the United States completed destruction in accordance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and consistent with the decisions of the Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties, but it

generously contributed to the chemical weapons destruction of other States Parties, including \$3 billion to the Russian Federation, \$115 million to the Syrian Arab Republic, \$53 million to Libya, and \$48 million to Albania.

Our accomplishments, along with the recent opening of the ChemTech Center, mark the beginning of a new chapter for the OPCW. As we celebrate this achievement today, we must also acknowledge that our job here is not done. The threat of chemical weapons possession, development, and use still exists and requires our continued focus.

Building an organization fit to meet these challenges sends a clear signal to all those considering the use of chemical weapons that they will be held to account. To this end, the United States will continue to support the OPCW through our active engagement and significant financial support for the Technical Secretariat's activities to carry out its mandates. As President Biden said prior to the Fifth Review Conference (RevCon-5), "[w]e must not stop until all children can grow up in a world without the scourge of chemical weapons."

We are encouraged by the broad support of over seventy delegations in a joint statement at RevCon-5 pledging to continue to advance the discussions of the last year through practical steps at the OPCW. The Convention grants authority to the Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties to make decisions on how to fulfill the terms of the Convention and we have important decision-making opportunities at upcoming meetings of these bodies this year.

This week, we should take the opportunity to strengthen the Technical Secretariat staff by moving forward efforts on geographic representation, gender diversity, and tenure flexibility. The United States thanks GRULAC for its leadership on establishing a working group on geographical representation. We encourage States Parties to encourage qualified candidates from underrepresented geographic regions to seek to join the OPCW's Technical Secretariat. With active assistance of States Parties, we believe the OPCW can achieve greater geographic and gender diversity. At the same time, the United States also supports providing the Director-General with authority for exceptions to the tenure policy to stem the loss of critical skills and loss of corporate memory.

With regards to NGOs, the United States strongly supports robust engagement with civil society and looks forward to further discussions about how to enhance the OPCW's engagement on a regular basis, including through a review of the guidelines on NGO attendance and participation.

The United States is eager to work with other countries to review the OPCW's industry-inspection regime. We thank other countries that joined the United States at our side event during the Review Conference and ahead of the July 10 Industry Cluster to discuss conducting a risk assessment of 2B04 flame retardant chemicals and consider reducing inspections at low-risk industry facilities. We look forward to working with all States Parties in the Industry Cluster to continue to review and improve in a transparent manner the industry inspection regime to ensure the efficient use of the Organization's resources.

As the OPCW begins its second biennium budget process, the United States remains committed to providing the resources the Organization needs to remain fit for purpose. The ability to conduct the full range of necessary inspections is essential to the continued implementation of the Convention. The United States pledges to work closely with States Parties to develop a budget that meets these needs while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

Mr. Chairperson, as we work to build a stronger organization, we cannot lose sight of the larger geopolitical context and the continued threat of chemical weapons use. The Russian Federation's unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine continues not only to inflict enormous damage on Ukraine, but also endanger the lives and livelihoods of people in many other regions around the globe. Over the last year, Russia killed tens of thousands of Ukrainian men, women, and children; destroyed more than half of the country's energy grid; bombed more than 700 hospitals and 2600 schools; recklessly fired artillery and rockets on the grounds of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear facility; and destroyed portions of the Togliatti-Odesa ammonia pipeline.

As the United States has long said and many States Parties noted in their national statements at RevCon-5, the Russian Federation is in noncompliance with the CWC. Russia has used Novichok nerve agents at least twice in recent years in

assassination attempts, which illustrates that it retains an undeclared chemical weapons program. This pattern of behavior blatantly violates the CWC and is contrary to that of a responsible country in the international system.

The United States took note of Ukraine's national statement during RevCon-5 and subsequent Note Verbale, which stated there was "evidence coming to light of Russian military forces using riot control agents against Ukraine defensive units." Further concerning evidence was Russia's state-controlled Channel 1 broadcast of an interview with a Russian soldier describing the Russian Army's use of riot control agents against Ukrainian armed forces. As States Parties, we know that the use of riot control agents as a means of warfare is prohibited by Article I of the Convention.

In light of Russia's unprovoked invasion, States Parties have come together to support Ukraine. The Technical Secretariat and countless States Parties have responded to Ukraine's request for assistance and protection, as provided for under the Convention. The Russian Federation's claims that it is threatened by assistance to Ukraine for protection against chemical weapons—assistance expressly provided for in the Convention—are disingenuous at best. If the Russian Federation had not invaded Ukraine, there would be no need for the international community to provide Ukraine such support. Russia's outlandish accusations are a desperate tactic to justify an unjustifiable war and distract from its own noncompliance with the Convention.

States Parties have consistently condemned the use of chemical weapons and taken steps to support the OPCW, including by funding its critical missions such as the investigations of chemical weapons use in Syria. The Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) has produced highly detailed and professional reports that identified the Syrian regime as responsible for CW use in Syria in five separate attacks. Holding Syria to account for its past use of chemical weapons and suspending certain of its privileges and voting rights under the Convention sends a clear message to all State Parties – and importantly, to the individual victims of these atrocities. We continue to call on the Syrian regime to comply with its obligation to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat to provide immediate and unfettered access to sites in Syria, to enable the Technical Secretariat to conduct its important work, and to completely, and verifiably, end its chemical weapons program.

Mr. Chairperson, the overwhelming majority of States Parties are united in efforts to fight against the use of chemical weapons. We call upon both Syria and Russia to work with the OPCW to return to compliance with the Convention and join the international community in supporting the OPCW's mission of eliminating the threat of chemical weapons.

Mr. Chairperson, the United States joins other States Parties in recognizing the work of the OPCW to safeguard the world from the horrors of chemical weapons and to support the development of its capabilities to address evolving chemical weapons threats. Doing so not only helps deter further chemical weapons use, but it also ensures that if chemical weapons are used again, we have the tools we need to respond and hold the perpetrators accountable.

I ask that this statement be designated an official document of this Council session and posted on both Catalyst and the public website.