



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF AUSTRALIA, CANADA AND NEW ZEALAND (CANZ) AT THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

AGENDA SUBITEM 7(E): ADDRESSING THE THREAT FROM CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE

Thank you Chair. I have the honour of taking the floor on this agenda item on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Chair,

We have closely followed the discussion of progress in the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme. It illustrates two points clearly.

One, the Technical Secretariat – through the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) – continues to undertake its work with respect to Syria with the utmost levels of professionalism, impartiality and integrity. CANZ applauds the Secretariat for its continued commitment and efforts on the Syria chemical weapons file, despite Syria's consistent disregard for its obligations as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention ('the Convention').

Secondly, Syria continues to fall short when it comes to fulfilling its international obligations and working in good faith with the OPCW. While CANZ welcomes the resumption of long-paused consultations between the DAT and Syria, we do not see this as proof that Syria has radically changed course in order to repair the damage it has done to the global norm against chemical weapons use. On the contrary, Syria's non-compliance is thoroughly documented and the facts concerning its repeated use of chemical weapons are not debatable. We therefore once again call on Syria to fully declare and eliminate its chemical weapons programme, as required of all States Parties to the Convention.

At the same time, we are deeply concerned by the use of chemical weapons by non-state actors within Syria. The IIT's fourth report found that there are reasonable grounds to believe that ISIL perpetrated a chemical weapons attack using sulphur mustard in Marea, Syria, in September 2015. Canada, Australia and New Zealand condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone under any circumstances. We also take this opportunity to commend the IIT for its perseverance in the fulfilment of its mandate. The IIT was established based on a decision of this Conference a little over 5 years ago to identify the perpetrators of specific instances of chemical weapons use, whether it be the Syrian Arab Republic or other actors, including non-state actors. CANZ strongly supported the decision on Syria, adopted at the Twenty-Eighth Session of the Conference of States Parties, and will continue to pursue every avenue to address the threat of chemical weapons use both by Syria and by other actors, including non-state actors.

Chair, we cannot allow the OPCW to abandon its mandate to investigate chemical weapons use in Syria under pressure from a small number of States Parties who fear accountability. Those same States Parties who prefer to spread deliberate falsehoods, sow confusion and raise doubts about the work of the Organisation for their own political ends. The Syrian people deserve better – they rightly demand answers and justice for the atrocities committed. There can be no impunity for those that carry out chemical weapons attacks.

Thank you, Chair.

I kindly ask you to consider this CANZ statement as an official document of the 105th Session of the Executive Council, and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

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