



# UK Delegation to the OPCW

***Statement to the 105<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Council  
of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical  
Weapons***

***by Her Excellency Joanna Roper, Permanent  
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Mr Chair, Director General, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

Let me begin by thanking Ambassador Fatu for a year of dedicated service to this Council. His leadership has driven important progress, including on issues that we have been struggling to resolve for many years.

I also thank Director General Arias for his report reflecting on the work of the Technical Secretariat. We are encouraged by the level of progress in a number of priority areas, building upon the momentum generated in 2023. The UK is committed fully to supporting the Technical Secretariat's programme of work in the coming year, including on enhancing geographical and other forms of representation including gender balance and tackling emerging threats.

Mr Chair,

This organisation rightly celebrates the Convention's success, but we are reminded too of the threat that chemical weapons continue to pose. My Prime Minister expressed his shock at the recent death of Alexei Navalny, noting that "He died for a cause for which he dedicated his whole life, freedom". His shocking poisoning by Russia in 2020 using Novichok is a stark reminder of the modern threat we face.

This week we also mark the sixth anniversary of the Novichok nerve agent attack in Salisbury. Five people were injured and Dawn Sturgess, poisoned in nearby Amesbury, tragically died. Only the Russian state had the technical means, operational experience and the motive to carry out the attack.

The attack in Salisbury and the 2020 poisoning of Alexei Navalny demonstrate Russia's utter contempt for the basic principles that sit at the heart of the CWC. This contempt for international law extends to Putin's illegal and brutal invasion of Ukraine. Two years since the

beginning of Putin's war, we continue to see evidence of Russian use of riot control agents, in clear breach of Article I of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The UK stands with Ukraine and any use of chemical weapons in Russia's invasion of Ukraine would bring severe consequences.

Mr Chair,

I would like to acknowledge the IIT's expert and diligent work to deliver the report published on 22 February, which found reasonable grounds to believe that Daesh were responsible for a sulphur mustard attack in Marea in September 2015. This report further confirms Daesh's use of chemical weapons in Syria. Independent reports from the JIM and IIT have now attributed a total of four chemical weapon attacks to Daesh and a further nine to the Syrian regime.

We call on all States Parties and the Technical Secretariat to implement in full the Decision adopted at the 28<sup>th</sup> Conference of States Parties on 'Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use and the Threat of Future Use'. This Decision will help us to mitigate the continuing, serious risks presented by both the Syrian Regime and non-state actors to Syrian civilians and regional security.

Mr Chair,

As we enter 2024, the work of the OPCW is more important than ever. We welcome the approval of the biennial budget at the 28<sup>th</sup> Conference of States Parties and decisions taken in November to improve the long-term viability of this crucial organisation. Yet, the threat of future chemical attack by both state and non-state actors demonstrates the need for us all to work even more intensively to ensure chemical weapon use is confined to history. Let me close by thanking the Director General and colleagues for working so hard to pursue this outcome. Thank you Mr Chair.