

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR NICOLE SHAMPAINÉ
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TO THE OPCW
AT THE ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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

It is an honor to be here with all of you today. I have had the pleasure of meeting with many of you, and I look forward to working together at the OPCW.

Recently, several of us had the solemn privilege of visiting the leper battlefield -- thanks to the generosity of the Belgian government. There, we stood in silence, overlooking the fields that witnessed the horrific gassing of soldiers during the First World War.

It is because of this use of chemical weapons in the trenches of Europe, in Asia during the Second World War, and in the Middle East in the 1980s that we gather in this great hall, delegations from all over the world, and repeat – time and time again – our commitment to the principal that “the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, at any time is unacceptable.”

This statement is our North Star. It is our mission. It is the responsibility bequeathed to us by the victims of chemical weapons, as well as those who worked tirelessly to negotiate the Chemical Weapons Convention. They entrusted us with the mission of preventing future generations of victims of chemical warfare.

Yet, as we meet here today, my country, together with others, is rushing to deliver tens of thousands of protective masks to Ukrainian soldiers who are being attacked by the Russian military on a regular basis with riot control agents and chemical weapons. Tens of thousands of masks.

If we are to uphold the mission of this Convention, we must make clear that Russia's violations of the CWC are unacceptable, must be addressed, and must come to an end. And we must support this Organization as it responds to requests for assistance from Ukraine under provisions of the CWC available to any State Party.

For a decade now, the Technical Secretariat has been engaged in efforts to ensure the Assad regime fully declares and destroys its chemical weapons stockpile once and for all. I hope we can all agree that there is no excuse for the Assad regime's games of obfuscation and delay. One decade is

enough. It is more than enough. And in the meantime, as States Parties, we should do all we can to ensure toxic chemicals and other materials used to produce chemical weapons do not make their way to Syria.

Sadly, Syria is not the only State Party with a chemical weapons program in the Middle East. As my delegation shared at the last Executive Council meeting in March, the United States assesses that Iran also maintains a chemical weapons program, a program that involves the development and filling of weapons with pharmaceutical-based agents. The United States is also aware that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps posted a video on an affiliated Telegram channel threatening to "punish" U.S. government officials while showing various weapons, including depictions of poison. We, therefore, call upon the Iranian government to end its chemical weapons program, cease its threats regarding the use of poisons, and ensure that neither it nor any of its proxies or other militant partners use chemical weapons.

As we work to rid the world of chemical weapons, I would also like to highlight the importance of the outstanding work done around the world to ensure countries have the capacity to prevent and address chemical attacks. First, I could not be prouder in this regard of U.S. contributions through the OPCW, as well as of our regional and bilateral programs, to

advance this critical goal. Since 2022, the United States has provided at least \$140 million in capacity building support and engaged nearly 100 States Parties to enhance their chemical security capabilities to prevent, detect, and counter chemical threats. For example, we have provided new voluntary funding and started new partnerships through the OPCW that I look forward to highlighting later in the agenda.

Second, as States Parties, we also benefit from the excellent work of the OPCW's Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), which helps us identify threats the Organization must be prepared to address. Its work on biotoxins is commendable in this regard, as are its recent efforts on chemical forensics. We look forward to its continued work on emerging threats, such as the establishment of a SAB Temporary Working Group on central nervous system (CNS)-acting chemicals, as well as new opportunities for efficient, relevant, and enhanced verification. As the Director-General has rightly identified, it is our responsibility as States Parties to ensure the Organization remains fit for purpose in the face of tomorrow's threats.

All of the reports we gaveled through at the beginning of this EC are a testament to our unity and common vision. A shared commitment to implement the Convention and oppose the use of chemical weapons no

matter where or when or by whom. I look forward to working with all of you as we uphold our noble mission for current and future generations.

Mr. Chairperson,

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

Thank you.