



AUSTRALIA
STATEMENT BY DR GREGORY FRENCH
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE 109TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Chairperson,

Australia commends the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat for their leadership and their continued professionalism, integrity, and impartiality in supporting the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We express our full support for the Chairperson of the 109th Session of the Executive Council, H.E. Mr Thomas Schieb, in conducting the work of this session.

Australia commends Director-General Arias for his unwavering commitment to upholding the CWC. We look forward to electing a new Director-General who shares the high levels of competence, integrity, efficiency, and leadership that the OPCW enjoys under DG Arias. We live in a world of increasing strategic complexity. Now more than ever, we need a strong and robust OPCW that can tackle the international security challenges of today and tomorrow.

Australia remains unwavering in our commitment to the CWC as a cornerstone of the global disarmament and arms control regimes. We must rally to defend these rules that protect all of us; these rules that form the character of the world that we want.

After years of obstruction by the former Assad regime, a unique window of opportunity has opened for the OPCW and the Syrian authorities to work towards the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. We must act quickly to verify and destroy any remaining chemical weapons and facilities in Syria.

We welcome the signals of cooperation from the Syrian authorities to work with the Technical Secretariat and international community. We commend the DG and the OPCW Syria Missions for their work to support Syria in delivering a full, complete and accurate declaration and commencing destruction. We thank all States Parties for their support and contributions, including Qatar for representing Syria at the OPCW.

The Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) were established in a manner consistent with and foreseen by the CWC. The teams have delivered impartial, timely, and invaluable work to address non-compliance and identify perpetrators of chemical weapons use. As reflected in the Ieper Declaration, we reiterate our strong position that the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks should be held accountable.

Chairperson,

Australia is deeply disturbed by the OPCW's latest Technical Assistance Visit (TAV) report confirming the presence of riot control agents (RCAs) and scheduled chemicals in samples collected from the frontlines in Ukraine. The reports were made in accordance with the OPCW's stringent protocols for impartial investigations and sample analysis. The three TAV reports released on 18 November 2024, 14 February and 20 June 2025 only heighten our cause for concern around compliance with Article 1 of the CWC.

Australia once again strongly condemns Russia's unprovoked, illegal, and immoral invasion of Ukraine, and reiterates its support for Ukraine's sovereignty and integrity. We call on Russia to adhere to its obligations under Articles I and IX of the CWC, particularly regarding the use of RCAs as a method of warfare, and to end its targeted disinformation campaigns. Australia further reiterates its position that the Russian Government is responsible for Alexei Navalny's treatment and death in prison. We again call on Russia to conduct an independent and transparent investigation into the circumstances



surrounding his death, as well as the poisoning using a Novichok nerve agent and the attempted assassination of Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom.

Chairperson,

Australia remains seriously concerned about the grave humanitarian crises caused by ongoing global conflicts. We welcome the Technical Secretariat's role in monitoring the potential use of chemical weapons in different conflict situations. If credible evidence of CWC violations emerges, anywhere, the OPCW should act as mandated and assist States Parties as required.

Chairperson,

Supporting our Pacific partners remains a key priority. We are committed to ensuring a peaceful, stable and prosperous Pacific region, which underscores Pacific countries' longstanding commitment to the CWC and its central role in maintaining international peace and security.

We must all work together to ensure that the OPCW remains prepared to respond to the use and threats of use of toxic chemicals by State and non-State actors. The OPCW's wide-ranging efforts, including through the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), and the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO), are highly commendable.

As the founder and permanent Chair of the Australia Group – which is approaching its 40th anniversary – we underscore the importance of the Group in helping to ensure the effective implementation of the CWC through the harmonisation of national export controls of sensitive and dual-use items. This enables States Parties to apply appropriate national export controls to reduce the risk of inadvertently contributing to the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons, while enabling peaceful legitimate trade.

Australia continues to support the OPCW and States Parties' efforts to promote greater diversity and inclusion at the OPCW, thereby ensuring the highest possible standards of efficiency, integrity, and competence. We support the OPCW's efforts to promote gender equality, tenure flexibility, geographic representation and civil society engagement.

Australia remains firmly committed to a world free of chemical weapons. This is not only a goal, but a responsibility, that all States Parties share. We all have the responsibility to ensure that the horrors of chemical weapons no longer feature in the newspapers of today but remain in the historical records where they belong.

Australia will continue to work with all States Parties to uphold the mutually agreed rules and norms that provide a robust bedrock for stability, peace, and prosperity.

Thank you, Chairperson.