



## **STATEMENT OF CANADA TO THE 109<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE OPCW EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

### **AGENDA ITEM 5: GENERAL DEBATE**

#### **DELIVERED BY H.E. MR. HUGH ADSETT, AMBASSADOR OF CANADA TO THE NETHERLANDS AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA TO THE ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS (OPCW)**

Excellencies and distinguished colleagues,

As much of the world is gripped with multiple conflicts, we must not lose sight of the work of the OPCW, and the critical issues addressed in this forum.

Canada reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. In the conduct of their illegal and unjustifiable war of aggression, Russian forces have used riot control agents and chloropicrin against Ukraine. Last week, German and Dutch intelligence services released their conclusions regarding the perpetrators of these attacks. The use of CS as a weapon has been confirmed in three reports by the Technical Secretariat. The time has now come for the Technical Secretariat to go beyond confirmation that chemicals are being used as weapons, and start the work of identifying the perpetrators, in line with the mandate given to the Director General by paragraphs 19 and 20 of Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3. To that end, we support Ukraine's request for an OPCW mission to identify the perpetrators of these attacks.

In Syria, we see an opportunity for results, with signs of the best cooperation between the OPCW and Syria since 2013. Canada welcomes the work done by Syrian transitional authorities, the government of Qatar, whom we thank for representing Syria's interests here in The Hague, and the Technical Secretariat towards securing and destroying the Assad regime's undeclared chemical weapons.

The Technical Secretariat has released three separate notes that describe, in narrative form, what it needs for chemical weapon destruction missions in Syria. In addition to these notes, it is also critically important that States parties receive a detailed and fully costed project proposal, with a robust justification and breakdown of expenditures. We are confident that this will help to unlock voluntary contributions from States Parties to enable the OPCW to fully, effectively and verifiably identify, account for, and destroy the remaining Assad-era chemical weapons and related infrastructure.

We note reports that chemical weapons were used by the Sudanese Armed Forces against the Rapid Support Forces. These reports were sufficient to trigger sanctions against Sudan by the United States of America, and for four States Parties to seek clarification under Article IX of the Convention. We have seen the clarifications from the Republic of the Sudan as circulated, and ask the Technical Secretariat to continue to monitor the situation in Sudan and act to support and strengthen compliance with the Convention.

This week, we heard from the eleven candidates for the position of Director General. The task for Council over these next few months is to consider these candidates, and their relative strengths and merits, against the needs of this Organisation in the years to come, and to identify one candidate – from a strong field – who will best lead the OPCW for the next four years. Someone who can lead in an inclusive manner, prioritizing gender equality and diversity, for the benefit of our collective work. We trust that Council members will reflect not only on their national interests but the broader needs of the Convention.



Chair,

As current president of the G7, Canada is playing a role in bringing resources to bear to address chemical weapons use. Through the Global Partnership and its Chemical Security Working Group, we are working closely with the OPCW to coordinate and leverage efforts of Global Partnership members to tackle threats and challenges. Our own Global Partnership contribution, the Weapons Threat Reduction Program, has already contributed significant funds to the OPCW. We encourage all States Parties to work with the OPCW to collectively address these threats and challenges.

Chair, there is a heavy agenda ahead of us. You can count on Canada's continued support as we work together to strengthen the OPCW.

Thank you.