



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

AGENDA SUBITEM 6(C): ELIMINATION OF THE SYRIAN CHEMICAL WEAPONS PROGRAMME

Thank you, Chair. I have the honour of addressing the Council today on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

CANZ welcomes the momentum since the last Executive Council session on efforts to inventory the remaining chemical weapons left behind after the fall of the Assad regime and to verify their destruction. It is commendable that amidst a deteriorating global security environment, we have seen progress in recent months on this important file.

We thank the Director-General for his leadership and commend the Technical Secretariat for its swift and effective work. The Director-General's visit to Damascus in February, accompanied by members of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and, for the first time, the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), marked a welcome change after years of obstruction and inaction. The OPCW's Syria Missions have consistently delivered high-quality, impartial work in line with the Convention and we appreciate the professionalism of all deployments and subsequent briefings to States Parties

We also appreciate all parties whose sustained engagement has enabled this progress – including the interim authorities in Syria for supporting the Technical Secretariat; Qatar for its constructive role representing Syria's interests; partners for providing funding; and the Dutch Government for extending manaakitanga (hospitality, generosity and support) for the Director General's visit.

It is our hope that this momentum and cooperation can be maintained. We want to see a sustainable, adaptive OPCW Mission established in the Syrian Arab Republic which is empowered to locate, declare and ultimately destroy remaining chemical weapons on an expedited basis. This will also facilitate efforts by the Syrian authorities to ensure accountability for the victims of these inhumane weapons, in line with the OPCW Ieper Declaration. Our shared goal is the full resolution of outstanding issues so that Syria can come into full compliance with the Convention.

We continue to support the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, which plays a critical role in strengthening international cooperation and building capacity.

Chair, CANZ reiterates our strong support for the OPCW and the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Chemical weapons are inhumane and they pose a clear and present threat if they fall into the wrong hands.. We remain committed to transparency, accountability, and full compliance with the Convention, including in Syria, to support regional and global security.

Thank you, Chair.