



**NEW ZEALAND STATEMENT
BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SUSANNAH GORDON
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE 109th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa [greetings, greetings, greetings to you all].

Ambassador Thomas Schieb, New Zealand congratulates you on assuming the Chair and thanks Germany for its stewardship at this critical juncture. You have our full support in guiding the Council's work over the coming year.

Director-General Fernando Arias, we appreciate your clear-eyed leadership and the dedication of the Technical Secretariat. Your reports provide both transparency and impetus for action; you continue to have New Zealand's confidence and backing for the remainder of your tenure.

We welcome the Director-General's latest progress reports on the Syrian chemical weapons file, which notes significant momentum since the last Executive Council session, despite what are clearly very challenging circumstances on the ground. It is our hope this momentum and cooperation can be maintained. We want to see a sustainable and effective OPCW Mission established in the Syrian Arab Republic, which is empowered to locate, declare and ultimately destroy remaining chemical weapons on an expedited basis. We are confident work will continue apace towards this important goal.

New Zealand is pleased to announce that we have made a voluntary contribution of NZD 532,500 to the Syria Trust Fund to help the OPCW with the clean-up work. Noting that the Secretariat needs continued financial support from Member States to complete the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme, we view this as a contribution to our collective peace and security. We encourage other member states to contribute if they are able.

New Zealand remains gravely concerned by the OPCW's findings of continued chemical weapons use in Ukraine. The Secretariat's third Technical Assistance Visit report confirmed the presence of the riot control agent CS along the front lines. Since the earliest days of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, we have been deeply troubled by credible reports of the use of these agents, which are prohibited as a method of warfare

under the Chemicals Weapons Convention, and the use of even more deadly toxic chemicals by Russian forces against Ukraine. Russian false counternarratives and unfounded accusations only serve to undermine the integrity of the Chemical Weapons Convention. New Zealand condemns these flagrant violations of the Convention; and we support calls for the timely attribution of the confirmed use of chemical weapons on the battlefield in Ukraine.

The Technical Secretariat must remain vigilant and be ready to investigate any credible allegation of chemical weapons use, wherever it occurs and whomever is implicated. Impunity anywhere erodes security everywhere. As such, we welcome the establishment of the new Office of Special Missions to strengthen the OPCW's ability to respond swiftly and effectively to urgent or unforeseen situations, and we commend the Technical Secretariat's efforts to enhance operational efficiency and readiness.

We note the special Executive Council meeting of 1 July 2025 requested by the Islamic Republic of Iran. New Zealand supports the right of any State Party to seek the Council's attention and for such discussions to take place in an inclusive manner. We urge all delegations to approach any such discussions constructively, anchored in facts and in full respect of the Convention. As a matter of firm principle, we call on all states, whether States Parties or signatory states, to uphold international humanitarian law and not to behave in a way that undermines the purpose and goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

A well-governed and well-resourced Technical Secretariat is indispensable. The selection of a new Director-General in 2025 is a crucial endeavour to ensure the OPCW has the leadership to identify strategic trends, to work with States Parties transparently and impartially, and to align the Technical Secretariat's resources, capabilities and work programme with these needs. We want a Technical Secretariat that has the full confidence and support of States Parties. New Zealand will support the draft Programme and Budget for 2026 and welcomes proposals that give the Director-General flexibility to recruit the expertise needed to confront emerging threats, including advances in artificial intelligence and dual-use chemistry.

A treaty that aspires to universality must reflect the world it serves. New Zealand reaffirms its commitment to gender balance, to elevating the voices of small and geographically remote States, and to deepening engagement with our Pacific neighbours. We thank the Technical Secretariat for tailoring capacity-building initiatives to these communities.

Chair, let me close with a Māori proverb: "*He waka eke noa* – we are all in this canoe together." The challenges we face are daunting, but together, with many paddles in the water, we will reach a world free of chemical weapons.

Ngā mihi – thank you.