



**AUSTRALIA**  
**STATEMENT BY DR GREGORY FRENCH**  
**PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE OPCW**  
**AT THE 30<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE CWC**

Chair,

Australia commends the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat for their leadership and professionalism in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We express full support for the Chair of the 30<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of the States Parties (CSP), H.E. Mr Agustín Vásquez Gómez, in conducting the work of this session, and thank H.E Mr Almir Šahović for managing the Conference this past year.

After more than a decade of obstruction and obfuscation under the Assad regime, developments in Syria and the work of this Organisation have started to pave the way for progress. We appreciate the efforts of all parties whose engagement has made this progress possible – including the Syrian authorities' cooperation with the Technical Secretariat, Qatar for its constructive role representing Syria's interests, and partners for providing financial and in-kind support.

Australia was pleased to cosponsor the expedited onsite destruction decision at the 110<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Council. This decision not only supports the ultimate objective of realising a Syria free from chemical weapons, but also allows for the collection and preservation of evidence necessary for attribution and eventual accountability, including for egregious violations of the Convention committed in, and against the people of Syria.

Australia supports the establishment of the Office of Special Missions (OSM). Integrating the functions and mandates of the Declarations Assessment Team, the Fact-Finding Mission, and the Identification and Investigation Team will streamline operations and deliver important efficiencies. Moreover, by leveraging the existing expertise of each of these teams and drawing on a strong record of impartial and rigorous work, we are confident that the OSM will be effective in carrying out critical work in Syria and beyond.

Chair, ensuring a peaceful, safe, and prosperous Pacific region is a key priority for Australia. This includes working with the OPCW and our Pacific partners to strengthen the implementation of the CWC and chemical security in the Pacific region. In September, Australia was proud to co-host the 'Regional Training Course on Preventing Illicit Transfers of Chemicals in the Pacific Region' in Brisbane. We look forward to further collaboration with Pacific partners to promote CWC implementation in the region.

We emphasise the importance of the Australia Group in countering the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons and enabling peaceful, legitimate trade. Through harmonising sovereign export controls on sensitive dual-use items, and publishing our Common Control Lists so they can be utilised by all states, the Australia Group plays a vital role in strengthening the effective implementation of the CWC.

Chair, Australia condemns in no uncertain terms Russia's illegal, unprovoked, and immoral invasion of Ukraine and we stand in full support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We also



remain deeply troubled by the growing and credible reports of use of prohibited chemical agents by Russia as a method of warfare against Ukraine. Three OPCW Technical Assistance Visit reports have confirmed the presence of riot control agents at sites along Ukraine's frontlines that are under attack by Russia. In July, German and Dutch intelligence services publicly concluded that Russia was pursuing an expanding and large-scale programme of producing and using chemical weapons.

This body of reporting raises serious non-compliance concerns. Any such violations of the Convention represent a grave threat to international peace and security and undermine the credibility of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. We call on Russia to adhere to its obligations under the CWC – including Articles I and IX of the Convention – and to cease its disinformation campaigns. We reiterate our clear position, as reflected in the Ieper Declaration, which we all adopted by consensus, that the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks should be held accountable.

Despite repeated calls for independent investigations into the attempted assassinations of Sergei Skripal and Alexei Navalny with Novichok nerve agents, we still await credible answers from Russia. Alexei Navalny's death in a Russian prison – for which Australia continues to hold Russia responsible – does not absolve Russia of its duties and responsibilities under the CWC.

Australia values the Technical Secretariat's role in monitoring the potential use of chemical weapons in different conflict situations around the world. If credible evidence of CWC violations emerges anywhere, the OPCW should act as mandated and assist States Parties as required.

Australia supports the 2026-27 Biennium Programme and Budget, which incorporates initial funding for the OPCW's crucial work in Syria while providing resources for the OPCW's key programmes and activities. We remain committed to supporting OPCW initiatives that promote gender equality, geographic representation, CWC universality, and civil society engagement.

Chair, as we near the end of Director-General Arias' term in office, Australia wishes to express its deep gratitude for his leadership and his commitment to implementing the Convention over the past eight years. The legacy Director-General Arias will leave behind is a rich and productive one. And as we look ahead, we congratulate and look forward to working with the incoming Director-General, H.E. Sabrina Dallafior Matter. We have every confidence in her capabilities to deliver on the OPCW's important mandate while navigating the many challenges ahead, and we pledge our steadfast support to her and the Technical Secretariat.

As States Parties, it is not only our legal responsibility but also our moral duty to uphold the prohibition against chemical weapons use for generations to come. Australia stands ready to work with States Parties and the Technical Secretariat to support the OPCW in this vital task.

Thank you, Chair.