



**STATEMENT OF CANADA TO THE 111th 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)**

Thank you, Ambassador Schieb,

Chair, it's a real pleasure to see you chairing our meeting this morning. We are very grateful for your leadership of Executive Council and it's a pleasure to be here with you today, with colleagues and of course with the Director General and Deputy Director General.

As we continue to read reports of chemical weapons use around the world, it is a reminder that the work of the OPCW is more crucial than ever.

Canada stands beside the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden in demanding answers from the Russian Federation regarding the death of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny in light of their determination that he was poisoned with epibatidine, a toxic chemical which is not naturally present in Russia and which could only have been administered purposely. Alexei Navalny died at the at the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service in Kharp, Russia. Only the Russian state had the motive, means, and opportunity to perform this heinous act, as well as the complete disregard for the rules based international system to even consider an assassination with such a toxin.

It is an opportunity to remind the Russian Federation that with respect to the use of biological toxins as weapons, both the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention apply. Article II is clear; the definition of a toxic chemical applies regardless of its origin or method of production. The inclusion of Ricin and Saxitoxin on Schedule 1 establishes a clear precedent.

This is another element of a pattern of Russia's disregard for the Convention, alongside its use of Novichoks for assassination attempts in the UK and in Russia, and its widespread use of riot control agents in combat in Ukraine.

At the end of January, the OPCW released the fifth report to identify perpetrators of chemical weapons use in Syria. We welcome this report's conclusions and salute the work of the members of the IIT, as well as the cooperation which Syria offered the IIT as it prepared this latest report. It concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force – under the Assad regime – were the perpetrators of the chemical weapons attack on October 1st 2016 in Kafr Zeita. This carefully prepared report is a key element of attribution for chemical weapons use. For Syria it may be a step forward towards accountability, a goal we should all share as we condemn the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone under any circumstances.

This issuance of this report reminds us that the OPCW Technical Secretariat needs to conduct an investigation to identify the perpetrators of the CS attacks described in the TS's three Technical Assistance Visit reports, as requested by Ukraine. We have assessed that the authorities provided under paragraph 20 of C-SS-4/DEC.3 permit this; my Australian counterpart will speak more about this on behalf of CANZ later this week.



Canada also continues to follow reports of the use of chemical weapons by the Sudanese Armed Forces against the Rapid Support Forces. Four African States raised questions for the Republic of the Sudan last year, and adequate answers have not been provided. We reiterate our request that the Technical Secretariat continue to monitor the situation in Sudan take whatever action the policy-making organs deem necessary to ensure that all parties remain in compliance with the Convention.

Chair, on a positive note we are pleased that important progress is being made to definitively address the Assad regime's CW legacy in Syria. The Technical Secretariat's efforts and needs are important but we all must not neglect Syria's needs, and Canada will work with Syria and others to help Syria meet its obligations under the Convention. We are glad to already share our programming and coordination expertise – lessons learned in supporting destruction of declared stockpiles in Syria, Libya and Russia – as part of the Syrian-led coordination effort referred to by my Syrian colleague.

Finally, Chair, we were also pleased to support the upcoming CHEMEX GRULAC taking place in the Dominican Republic on 27 April to 7 May 2026. Incidents concerning toxic chemicals can take place anywhere, and it is important that we ensure that all States Parties can respond to chemical threats. CHEMEX Africa was a great success and we are glad the OPCW is extending the model in another region. We wish all participants the best of luck, and hope it is as successful as CHEMEX Africa was in 2023.

Chair, there is much to do this week, but you can continue to count on Canada's support as we work together to strengthen the OPCW.

Thank you.