



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

AGENDA SUBITEM 6(f): Addressing the Threat of the Use of Chemical Weapons, Other

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

Chair, last month marked four years since Russia's illegal, full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In that time, Ukraine has reported over 12,583 incidents of alleged chemical weapons use. We have heard evidence of riot control agents and other toxic chemicals being deployed. These reports have come from media sources, security services, and States Parties. Importantly, the Technical Secretariat, the independent, impartial, and expert body entrusted with determining chemical weapons use, has also confirmed the presence of chemical weapons on the frontlines in Ukraine.

Chair, it is essential that these reports are not viewed in isolation. Nor are they limited to the frontlines of Ukraine. Rather, they are part of a broader and deeply troubling pattern of Russia using chemical weapons against individuals and states that it deems to be adversaries.

In 2018, Russian delegates stood in this very room and told us they were upholding the Chemical Weapons Convention. Meanwhile Novichok was used against Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom. As the independent inquiry into the death of Dawn Sturgess concluded in December – Russia's 'deployment of a highly toxic nerve agent in a busy city was an astonishingly reckless act'. It is remarkable that more lives were not lost.

We witnessed a similar pattern in 2020 when Russia dismissed international concerns as Alexei Navalny was poisoned with a nerve agent which left him unconscious and requiring critical medical care. And just last month, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom presented their conclusions that Mr Navalny's death in Russian state custody two years ago resulted from poisoning by the lethal toxin Epibatidine.

Taken together, these incidents present a compelling and disturbing case, one that should concern all States Parties. It clearly demonstrates Russia's reckless behaviour and blatant disregard for the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Chair, there must be no impunity for the use of chemical weapons, whether on the battle front, on foreign soil, or at home. The credibility and integrity of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the security of a future free of chemical weapons depends on accountability. We therefore strongly support the continued work of the Technical Secretariat to establish the facts, attribute responsibility where mandated, and ensure violations of the Convention do not go unanswered.

Chair, CANZ commends the constructive and pragmatic approach demonstrated by the Executive Council in recent years. As New Zealand completes our term and Australia assumes this seat, we thank our fellow members for their collaboration over the past two years. To those States who now embark on their term, we welcome you and trust you will continue in the same spirit of collaboration as we collectively safeguard the Convention, and the norms it represents.

Thank you, Chair.