



STATEMENT AS PREPARED

H.E. AMBASSADOR NICOLE SHAMPAINE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE OPCW AT THE ONE HUNDRED AND ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Chairperson, Director-General, Colleagues,

The United States remains firmly committed to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We value the rigorous technical work of the OPCW, and we believe the mission of the OPCW to uphold the Convention is of paramount importance to international security.

This is why the United States joins States Parties that take seriously the rigorous, technical findings of the OPCW -- whether they be OPCW reports confirming the Assad regime's possession and repeated use of chemical weapons, OPCW reports confirming the exposure of Yulia and Sergei Skripal and Alexei Navalny to Novichok nerve agents, or, more recently, OPCW reports confirming the presence of riot control agents in samples taken from the battlefield following multiple reported Russian attacks against Ukrainian forces.

Taking OPCW technical findings seriously is not politicization.

It is a foundational principle of this Organization and the minimum required of us, as members, to uphold the Convention.

Those who value the technical work performed by the OPCW, and take seriously its reporting, whether it be in Syria during the Assad regime or in Ukraine today are protecting this Organization from politicization.

Today, Russia is systematically using the chemical weapon chloropicrin as well as riot control agents across the frontline in Ukraine. Previously, Russia used Novichok nerve agents to poison Mr. Navalny and the Skripals.

Last month, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK announced their determination that a toxin found in poison dart frogs in South America and not found naturally in Russia was detected in samples from Navalny's body, adding that Russia had the means, motive, and opportunity to administer this poison to him. We should all be deeply troubled by this finding if true.

In Syria, Russia told us for over a decade that the Assad regime had destroyed its chemical weapons program while the regime continued to use those very weapons against its own people. Just as it was crucial to confront the Assad regime's chemical weapons program, it is crucial today to confront Russia's chemical weapons program. The normalization of chemical attacks in conflict is a danger to us all.

This is also why we continue to urge Sudanese officials to work with the OPCW to come back into compliance with the Convention by submitting a full declaration and destroying its chemical weapons program, which includes the use of chlorine as a chemical weapon.

We continue to voice concerns about the fact that Iran has a chemical weapons program involving the weaponization of pharmaceutical-based agents.

In fact, Iran's presence on this Council degrades the integrity and credibility of this organization and the Convention alike, and we call on all States Parties to oppose Iran continuing to hold a seat at this table.

Opposing the use of chemical weapons "anywhere, by anyone, at any time" means addressing violations of the Convention with the seriousness they deserve.

Today, we stand united behind the efforts of Syria's government to work with the OPCW to ensure that any remnants of the Assad regime's chemical weapons program are destroyed. Syria has given the OPCW unfettered access to sites, documents, and witnesses. Syria has deployed hazardous materials teams, emergency medical personnel, rescuers, security teams, and other experts to support OPCW deployments. This mission is a challenging undertaking because of the secrecy of the former regime's chemical weapons program and the security conditions on the ground. We commend Syria for its commitment to supporting

this mission and are pleased the OPCW has established a continuous presence in country.

In Ukraine, the OPCW has made clear that its rigorous technical standards were met in preserving the chain of custody of samples that enabled sample analysis as presented in three TAV reports documenting the presence of riot control agents in samples drawn from the frontlines following reported Russian attacks against Ukrainian soldiers. In sum, Russia is normalizing chemical warfare.

As we encourage States Parties to implement their obligations under the Convention, as we support capacity building efforts to ensure countries are capable of preventing and protecting themselves against the use of chemical weapons, and as we call for the universalization of the Convention, we must also take seriously OPCW technical reports and do all we can to address violations of the Convention.

Thank you.