



Statement by H.E. Mr. Kevin Kelly

Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

At the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction

27 November-1 December 2017

Mr Chairperson,

Allow me to first express our congratulations to you Ambassador Bellouki of Morocco on your appointment as incoming Chair of the Conference of the States Parties. I would also like to express our warm thanks and appreciation to Ambassador Israng of Germany, for his exceptional efforts as outgoing Chair. To Ambassador Arias of Spain, please let me express our congratulations on your nomination to the position of Director General of the OPCW. Your stewardship and guidance will be invaluable in these critical times. Ireland wishes to extend its warm appreciation to our outgoing Director General for his unwavering professionalism and tireless commitment to the cause of this organisation.

Ireland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu has stated that ‘Chemical weapons are a relic of the past and must remain so’, a view which we fully endorse. We were pleased to support the resolution on chemical weapons at this year’s First Committee and would like to commend Poland for their efforts in ensuring the resolution passed, again with a strong majority. Ireland stresses the importance of full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and its declaration and verification regime. The development and use of chemical weapons, including the use of any toxic chemicals as weapons, by anyone – state or non-state - anywhere, anytime, and under any circumstances is absolutely unacceptable and must be rigorously condemned by the international community and those responsible held accountable to the full extent of international law.

Mr Chairperson,

It is deeply troubling that, in this, the 20th year since the establishment of the OPCW and entry into force of the CWC, its mission still proves to be so urgent and necessary. Upon accession to the Convention, Syria made a Declaration outlining that they ‘shall comply with the stipulations contained [in the Convention] and observe them faithfully and sincerely’.

Syria has not observed these stipulations faithfully and sincerely.

Syria has repeatedly violated the Convention.

Ireland unequivocally condemns Syria for its use of chemical weapons and calls upon Syria to honour the commitments and obligations it entered into on becoming a State Party to the Convention. We urge Syria to engage in good faith with the OPCW in all aspects of its investigations.

Ireland continues to support and trust the efforts and work of the OPCW, including the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism, the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the Declaration Assessment Team

(DAT). We are dismayed that the JIM's mandate has not been renewed by the UN Security Council. We ask States to consider the negative impact that this will have on our collective ability to ensure accountability for violations of the Convention in Syria. We believe that those who are responsible for these reprehensible acts must be held accountable. There can be no impunity for such grave violations of international law. The use of chemical weapons in Syria cannot go unaddressed and unpunished.

The repeated and flagrant use of chemical weapons in Syria represents a dangerous weakening of the universal norm against their use and serves to embolden those who dare to use them. We urge States to consider the message that failing to renew the JIM's mandate sends to victims and survivors living in Syria, or who have been forcibly displaced from Syria, whose testimony and living witness we have heard and whose lives have been irrecoverably damaged through the use of chemical weapons. While we cannot hear the testimony of those whose lives have been cut short through the use of chemical weapons, we can honour their memory by ensuring the perpetrators of these acts are identified and brought to justice, and that the future possibility of use of chemical weapons is excluded.

While efforts to improve the OPCW's operations are welcome, safeguarding and defending the independence and integrity of the Fact Finding Mission is paramount in order for it to continue to fulfil its mandate to establish the fact of use of chemical weapons. We trust and are fully satisfied with the assessment by the Fact Finding Mission and the subsequent decision made by the Director General that 'the security risks associated with a deployment to Khan Shaykhun far outweighed any additional corroboration of the facts that have already been established'. Attempts to renegotiate the FFM's role by revising the terms of reference serves to undermine its authority and distract from the findings of the 7th JIM Report, which assigned responsibility for chemical weapons attacks to the Syrian Armed Forces and ISIL.

Mr Chairperson,

As we approach the 4th Review Conference, Ireland appreciates the work undertaken to establish the Future Priorities of the OPCW. As part of Ireland's practical contribution to countering WMD, the Irish Defence Forces, in collaboration with the ICRC, have delivered training to aid workers in surviving the effects of a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attack. We hope to continue with the delivery of similar training courses in the future.

Mr. Chairperson,

As this organisation evolves, it will be important to recognise new developments in the use of chemistry, as well as the potential emergence of new types of chemical weapons agents. We therefore fully support the initiative by Australia and Switzerland on Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals, and call for all States Parties to constructively engage with the proposal.

While it is important to bring focus to the challenges facing our Convention, it is equally important to commend and raise awareness of its achievements. Ireland welcomes the recent announcement by the Russian Federation of the verified destruction of their remaining chemical weapons. We also acknowledge the gratitude expressed by Russia to mark the occasion, when they thanked donor states, including Ireland, and the Director General and Technical Secretariat, for their support of the destruction programme. This demonstrates what can be achieved through the cultivation of a spirit of cooperation and shared endeavour. Let us not lose sight of this cooperation and the objectives of our Convention, as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of its adoption and continue to work towards securing our goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

In closing, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Conference and be published on the OPCW website and extranet.

Thank You.