



**NEW ZEALAND STATEMENT  
BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SUSANNAH GORDON PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW AT THE THIRTIETH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE  
OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,  
Director-General,  
Distinguished delegates,

*Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa* [greetings, greetings, greetings to you all].

Allow me to congratulate H.E. Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez, of El Salvador, for your appointment as the Chairperson of this meeting. I can assure you of my delegation's full and continued support.

I also wish to congratulate Director-General Fernando Arias and Deputy Director General Odette Melono, for the Organisation's achievements under their leadership. You have led with knowledge, clarity and poise, and our Organisation is stronger for it.

Chair, as we mark the thirtieth session of the Conference, as we confirm the appointment of a new Director-General, and as I come to the end of my own tenure in the Netherlands, it is a good time to reflect on how far we have come.

Chair, this time last year, we stood in this room and declared our shared frustrations that we were barely closer to answers on outstanding issues in Syria, despite 11 years of effort. What a difference a year can make. With the fall of the Assad regime, mere days after CSP-29, Syria has entered a new era - one marked by genuine cooperation, cautious optimism and real opportunity to get rid of the former regime's chemical weapons programme. We hope for many of the victims, this will be the first true step towards closure of this grim chapter.

But momentum must be harnessed, and we must be a well-oiled system to seize this opportunity. We welcomed progress this year, including the decision to allow for the expedited, on-site destruction of chemical weapons and their precursors in Syria. We worked constructively to achieve a budget by consensus, in which we established the Special Fund for Syria. New Zealand facilitated, with our Mexican colleagues, the decision

on rehiring at the March Executive Council, which will allow limited flexibilities needed to work efficiently and effectively to bring the Syrian file to a close once and for all.

New Zealand is proud to have contributed over NZ\$530,000 this year to support the ongoing work in Syria. We acknowledge the expertise, funds and logistical support that many States Parties have provided. Most importantly, we recognise the strides made by the new Syrian authorities, in the face of many competing challenges, to engage proactively with the Technical Secretariat. We look forward to continued engagement and ongoing support by all States Parties for our shared security and for the future prosperity of Syria.

Chair, we encourage States Parties, from all regions, to share their knowledge, expertise, and unique perspectives. We have seen, for example, multiple States Parties step up to support the Director-General's focus on AI and emerging technologies. The International Cooperation and Assistance team continues to deliver value across regions to ensure full implementation and compliance with the Convention. It is only through inclusive and diverse collective action that the OPCW will continue to be an impactful, efficient and well-functioning disarmament body, responsive to challenges to the Convention, emerging threats and opportunities, and to the needs of its membership.

However, this is also the time to reflect on how much there still is to do. The next Director General will take up this role at a time where the ongoing work in Syria looms large, chemical weapons use is reemerging, and the multilateral system is under strain. Strong, dynamic and informed leadership will help the Technical Secretariat to respond to the many challenges ahead.

Nowhere is this more imperative than in Ukraine. As we have heard from many sources this year, the use of chemical weapons against Ukraine is not an isolated incident but part of an escalating and systematic pattern of use. Three reports from Technical Assistance Visits this year have confirmed the presence of riot control agents and more toxic chemicals like Chloropicrin. Intelligence services have been clear that Russia is scaling up its production and use of chemical weapons. Any violation of the Convention must not be accepted.

Chair, we commend the Technical Secretariat for its professional and impartial work to investigate violations of the Convention. We urge the Secretariat to continue to progress on one of its core functions: to investigate cases of chemical weapons use and identify those responsible, including in Ukraine.

New Zealand applauds the resilience Ukraine continues to demonstrate in the face of aggression by Russia. We welcome the candidacy of Ukraine, Slovakia and Slovenia to the Executive Council. Each brings their own expertise and perspective, and each has demonstrated their constructive and cooperative approach in this forum. We trust they will uphold the Convention, effectively govern the Organisation, and defend the norm against the use of chemical weapons.

Chair, if there is one thing this year has shown us, it is that we as States Parties have risen to meet many challenges. We have demonstrated our ability to compromise, to communicate and to reach consensus for the greater good of all our futures.

Ambassador Dallafior, you now stand at the helm as we face this future. The task ahead is not easy. But we are confident in your leadership and your ability to steer this Organisation through the many challenges ahead. It is our role as States Parties to support and enable you in your role.

Chair, it has been an honour for New Zealand to serve on the Executive Council this year, and for myself, it has been an honour to lead our representation these past four years. I see my delegation's work here in the Hague very much in the context of New Zealand's broader goals for disarmament and non-proliferation. Those who know our work in New York, in Vienna and in Geneva will know that New Zealand is a strong and proud advocate for a world free of all weapons of mass destruction. Delegates here today can be proud that collectively we work on making our world just a little bit safer and a bit less cruel.

In closing, let me leave you with a Te Reo Māori proverb: *He aha te mea nui? Māku e kii atu, he tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata.*

What is the most important thing in the world? Well, let me tell you, it is people, it is people, it is people.

Thank you, colleagues, and thank you Chair.