



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

AGENDA SUBITEM 6(f): ADDRESSING THE THREAT FROM CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE

Thank you, Chair. I have the honour of addressing the Council today under this agenda item on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

After years of brutal and illegal use of chemical weapons by the former Syrian government against its own people, as well as obstruction in any engagements on its initial declaration, recent developments in Syria present a significant opportunity for the OPCW and States Parties to close the Syrian chemical weapons file once and for all.

CANZ commends the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat for their recent visit to Damascus and their efforts to determine the extent of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

CANZ welcomes the indications from Syria's interim authorities that Syria will cooperate with the Technical Secretariat, fulfil Syria's obligations under the Convention and comply with the decisions of the OPCW Policy-Making Organs and relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

We reaffirm our full support for the invaluable work of the Technical Secretariat and its teams, including the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), the Declarations Assessment Team (DAT) and the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM). They have consistently delivered rigorous and high-quality reports and have carried out their work with the highest levels of professionalism, impartiality, and integrity.

We reiterate our confidence in the IIT's mandate, established by the CSP decision in June 2018, to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons use in Syria. This decision was adopted with the support of more than the two thirds of those present and voting required by the Chemical Weapons Convention and Rule 69 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the States Parties. The IIT mandate is also fully consistent with the measures and functions entrusted to the Technical Secretariat under the Convention, including its obligation under Article VIII and Part XI of the Verification Annex to report any information that might serve to identify the origin of any chemical weapons used.

CANZ was encouraged to see that a representative of the IIT joined the DG and other Technical Secretariat members as part of their visit to Damascus. CANZ welcomes this, and looks forward to further cooperation with the IIT, including by sharing information and granting full access. CANZ has supported efforts to bring justice for chemical weapons victims and survivors in Syria for over a decade,

and we welcome the interim authorities' statements that they will work for justice and accountability for the use of chemical weapons.

Chair, the fight against impunity is far from over. Canada, Australia and New Zealand reiterate our strong conviction, reflected in the OPCW Ieper Declaration, that perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons should be held accountable.

CANZ stands ready to assist the OPCW with its critical mission. Thank you, Chair.