

OPCW Executive Council 78th Session
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Australian intervention in the General Debate, 17 March

Australia would like to record its appreciation for the Technical Secretariat's ongoing work to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons program, including its coordination of CW destruction activities across the world, its work with Syrian authorities and UNOPS to destroy chemical weapon production facilities, its Fact-Finding Mission and its efforts to help address ambiguities and gaps in Syria's initial CWC declaration.

We welcome the third report of the OPCW Declarations Assessment Team on Syria's declaration, and look forward to the Team's briefing later in this Session. Australia strongly urges Syria to submit the necessary amendments to its declaration without further delay.

Mr Chairman

I would like also to raise the issue of central nervous system-acting chemicals.

At last year's Conference of States Parties, Australia submitted a national paper and hosted a side-event to encourage CWC member states to help stimulate further debate on Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals – known by some as 'incapacitating agents' – and their use in law enforcement.

Given the significant dangers posed by such chemicals, particularly when dispersed as an aerosol, Australia believes this issue warrants serious consideration by governments and discussions among CWC States Parties.

Together with Switzerland and a number of other interested delegations, Australia will be engaging States Parties to clarify facts and dispel myths about central nervous system-acting chemicals. I ask once again that delegations bring this issue to the attention of capitals.

As a transparency measure, Australia has made known its own national position regarding the use of these chemicals for law enforcement purposes. I welcome the new declaration on this made by Poland earlier today. I encourage all States Parties to do the same, and in the meantime express their support for commencing discussions on this issue within the OPCW.