

Statement by New Zealand

OPCW Executive Council Session 80 6 October 2015

Delivered by H. E. Janet Lowe, Permanent Representative

Thank you Mr Chair.

I have just four brief points. Firstly, New Zealand welcomes the continued focus by the Executive Council on the situation in Syria, and considers it imperative that the Council continues to monitor the situation closely. Well over a year after the OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team began its work, we are no closer to obtaining answers regarding the numerous "gaps, ambiguities and uncertainties" in Syria's initial declaration. This is highly unsatisfactory to say the least, and we urge the Syrian government to cooperate fully, and address urgently, the outstanding issues.

Secondly, New Zealand reiterates its support for the work of the Fact Finding Mission regarding the disturbing, ongoing and credible, allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria. As we have said repeatedly, the international response must match the seriousness of these allegations, and those responsible must be held to account. In this connection, New Zealand welcomes the appointment of the steering panel for the Joint Investigative Mechanism (established by UNSC Resolution 2235) to identify the perpetrators of these chemical attacks. We hope its work will get underway as soon as possible.

Thirdly, New Zealand continues to support the call for consultations on the weaponisation of central nervous system-acting chemicals in law enforcement. We share the concerns raised by other States Parties in relation to the health and safety risks of such chemicals, and the possibility of deliberate misuse.

Fourth and finally Mr Chair, New Zealand would like to express its appreciation for the work undertaken by the Director General and Technical Secretariat on the future of the OPCW, including last week's Retreat. We also commend the Ambassador of Ghana for his skill in guiding the discussion. Looking ahead, assuming the OPCW's destruction work remains on track, rebalancing the organisation from an emphasis on disarmament to prevention makes sense. In New Zealand's view, due attention needs to be given to national implementation, reducing the burden of compliance (particularly in developing countries), strengthening regional cooperation and leveraging the knowledge and resources of other stakeholders.

At the same time, in accordance with its mandate, the OPCW must retain its core capability and technical expertise including a robust verification regime. Plus the capacity to respond quickly and effectively to new threats, as well as advances in science and technology. We look forward to working with the Director-General and other States Parties to consider the issues further, and support the idea of establishing a mechanism for consideration of this topic by States Parties, for example an informal open-ended working group.

I ask that this statement be recorded as an official document of this session, and published on the OPCW's external server and public website.

Thank you Mr Chair.