



OPCW

Executive Council

Eightieth Meeting
6 – 8 October 2015

EC-80/NAT.11
6 October 2015
ENGLISH only

AUSTRALIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR BRETT MASON
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTIETH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,

I have the distinct honour of addressing the Executive Council for the first time. I look forward to working closely with you, with the Director-General and his fine staff, and with all States Parties to further strengthen the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Chemists have forever sought to change less valuable compounds into more valuable compounds.

Sometimes their goal is fanciful – like turning lead into gold.

Sometimes their goal is good – like using chemicals to improve crops and fight disease.

And sometimes the goal of chemists is evil – mixing chemicals to produce agents of mass murder.

For the OPCW the challenge will remain. Success will be found in the creative alchemy of national interest, regional priorities and international goodwill.

Whereas we had to rely on a miracle for water to be changed into wine, Mr Chairman, let us hope that we do not have to rely on a miracle to finally eliminate chemical weapons.

Australia appreciates the great work of the OPCW to rid the world of chemical weapons, and we stand in support of the Technical Secretariat as it carries out its vital task.

We look forward to the day when the OPCW can claim an end to its chemical weapons destruction phase. However, we must never become complacent and take our eyes from the ever-present challenge of preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. This includes preparing for and responding to new and emerging technologies.

In this context, Mr Chairman, I repeat Australia's call for a start to discussion on Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals – or so-called 'incapacitating agents'. Many of these chemicals are highly toxic – some are just as lethal as traditional nerve agents. For this reason, Australia believes that their aerosolisation and use in law enforcement scenarios deserves careful consideration by all States Parties.



Australia has circulated a draft joint paper on Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals, specifically calling for discussions between States Parties and the Technical Secretariat. We intend to submit the joint paper for this year's Conference of the States Parties, and I urge all delegations to join as co-sponsors.

Australia greatly appreciates the statements already made by States Parties, either expressing support for discussion or making known their national positions regarding these chemicals. Australia has previously confirmed that it is not developing, producing, using or stockpiling any toxic chemicals, other than riot control agents, for law enforcement purposes. I reaffirm Australia's national position today, and I encourage all other States Parties to do likewise.

My Government remains deeply concerned about the seemingly endless reports of chemical weapon use in the Syrian Arab Republic, including by the Syrian Government and non-State actors. We therefore welcome the establishment of the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism, and we call on all parties to cooperate fully with its mission.

Australia also welcomes the comprehensive report prepared by the Declaration Assessment Team, which helps to clarify our understanding of the gaps and inconsistencies that remain in the Syrian Arab Republic's initial Chemical Weapons Convention declaration. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to submit an accurate, comprehensive amendment to its declaration without further delay.

I ask that this statement be considered an official document of this Executive Council session.

Mr Chairman, I thank you.

--- 0 ---