



OPCW

Executive Council

Forty-Eighth Meeting
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NEW ZEALAND

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF CANADA, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASADOR JANET LOWE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE FORTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman

In taking the floor I have the honour to speak also on behalf of Canada and Australia.

The OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission has discharged its duties professionally and impartially. Its three reports have presented a strong and credible body of evidence that establishes, with a high degree of confidence, that weaponised chlorine was used systematically and repeatedly in the attacks throughout 2014.

While we are of the view that the evidence can only lead us to conclude that the Syrian Government – a State Party to the Convention – bears responsibility for these attacks, we recognise that the Fact-Finding Mission's mandate does not include attribution. We note that the decision adopted today respects this aspect of the Mission's mandate. Therefore it is particularly disappointing that a vote has had to be called on the draft decision.

The use of chemical weapons in several Syrian villages last year presents a fundamental challenge to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and to the solemn commitment made by every delegation in this room to completely eliminate chemical weapons. The international response should match the seriousness of the allegations and our unconditional commitment to the objective of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Those responsible must be held to account, by all means available.

While we believe consensus decision-making has been one of the OPCW's traditional key strengths, the threat posed to the credibility of the Organisation and the Chemical Weapons Convention by the recent events in the Syrian Arab Republic is too important to allow an Executive Council response to be blocked by a single State Party.

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

Thank you Mr Chairman.

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