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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR KENNETH D. WARD PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE OPCW
AT THE FIFTY-SEVENTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman, Mr Director-General, distinguished ambassadors and delegates,

The subject of today's meeting is the egregious and deliberate use of a military-grade nerve agent on the territory of the United Kingdom just one month ago today. With grim irony, we find ourselves discussing one intolerable act on the solemn anniversary of another. Of all the days for us to be here, we are meeting on the first anniversary of the Khan Shaykhun attack, where the Assad regime used the nerve agent sarin to kill and injure hundreds of people. Syria's culpability for this despicable act was confirmed by the independent and impartial OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism. Today, the United States will issue a joint ministerial statement with France, Germany, and the United Kingdom calling for accountability for the Khan Shaykhun attack. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons will see a day of reckoning. No one should think they can use chemical weapons with impunity.

Before I address the subject formally on today's agenda, I would like to reflect on what is happening in Syria. As we sit here today, the Syrian regime continues to kill its own citizens, aided by the Russian Government. Russia voted to demand a cessation of hostilities in United Nations Security Council resolution 2401, only to use it as a tool to further the regime's military aims. The Assad regime's atrocities in Syria have caused tremendous human suffering, killing hundreds of thousands of people, and driving millions from their homes. And reports continue that the Assad regime is using chemical weapons to terrorize and kill the Syrian people. The United States calls on the international community not to tolerate any use of chemical weapons, to hold accountable those responsible for such heinous acts, and to redouble our efforts to prevent any further use.

The United States wholeheartedly supports the United Kingdom and the need for a special meeting of the Executive Council to discuss the event in Salisbury, but today's meeting is premature. The OPCW's independent analysis is still underway. The Council needs to allow time for the OPCW to complete its analysis to verify the United Kingdom's assessment that a military-grade nerve agent was used in the attack on March 4.

Let us not for a moment indulge the preposterous fiction that Russia, in good faith, convened today's meeting in order to support the efforts of the United Kingdom and the Technical Secretariat; it is an all-too-transparent attempt by Moscow to deflect attention from the role it played in this insidious attack on UK soil. Russia is known to have developed such



military-grade nerve agents of the type used in the Salisbury attack. Russia has a record of conducting state-sponsored assassinations. Russia, as made clear in public statements by its own officials, views defectors and so-called “traitors” as legitimate targets for assassination. As we have stated previously, the United States agrees with the United Kingdom’s assessment that Russia is responsible for the attack on the United Kingdom’s soil using a chemical weapon—either through deliberate use or through its failure to declare and secure its stocks of this nerve agent. There is no plausible alternative explanation.

Russia’s involvement in the use of a nerve agent in Salisbury has made it extraordinarily clear that Russia only eliminated its *declared* chemical weapons stockpile. Russia’s declaration did not include the development, production, and stockpile of this type of military-grade chemical weapon. Moreover, through its involvement in the use of a military-grade nerve agent in the United Kingdom, Russia has violated the Chemical Weapons Convention, brazenly flouting the international norm against the use of chemical weapons.

In response to Russia’s involvement in the use of this agent, the United States has thus far expelled 48 Russian intelligence officers serving at Russia’s bilateral mission and began the process of expelling 12 intelligence operatives from the Russian Mission to the UN—in total, the single largest expulsion ever ordered by the United States. The United States, the United Kingdom, NATO, and 27 other countries have together expelled over 150 Russian intelligence officers, a testament as to how seriously the world takes Russia’s ongoing global campaign to undermine international peace and security, to threaten the sovereignty and security of countries worldwide, and to subvert and discredit international institutions like the OPCW.

The decision circulated by the Russian Federation for today’s meeting is patently unacceptable and nothing more than a smokescreen to disguise Russia’s culpability in the March 4 assassination attempt. The United Kingdom requested bilateral assistance from the OPCW under paragraph 38(e) of Article VIII of the Convention, assistance which is still ongoing, as is the United Kingdom’s national criminal investigation into the use of chemical weapons on its sovereign territory. The Russian proposal seeks to undermine and impede these two ongoing efforts, and to deflect attention from its own outrageous actions. As such, should the Russian Federation call for a vote, the United States will vote against the Russian decision.

The United States firmly believes that the Council must come together to condemn Russia for its failure to declare its full chemical weapons program, and, further, to condemn it for its involvement in the Salisbury attack—an attack for which the perpetrators must be held accountable by the international community.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

I ask that my statement be designated an official document of this special meeting of the Executive Council and posted on the external server and the public website.