



OPCW

Executive Council

Fifty-Seventh Meeting

4 April 2018

EC-M-57/NAT.6

4 April 2018

ENGLISH and RUSSIAN only

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR A.V. SHULGIN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE OPCW
AT THE FIFTY-SEVENTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

As you understand, we need to respond to the three statements that were made by the permanent representative of Bulgaria on behalf of the European Union, and the permanent representatives of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

We were counting on a constructive discussion today. We made our national statement—it was balanced, carefully calibrated, and imbued with concern to put the situation at hand back on track to the legal field and act strictly in line with the Chemical Weapons Convention. We have addressed the States Parties with a reasonable, calm call to facilitate cooperation. And what do we hear in response? Suddenly the representative of Bulgaria takes the floor on behalf of the European Union to read out a statement containing an onslaught of insinuations: The Russian Federation, they say, is not responding to the legal questions posed by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, an attack in Salisbury was carried out, and it is highly probable that it was the Russian Federation that did it. And so on in the same tone. One can hear the chorus of the old tune of completely unfounded accusations against us.

I would like to say a few words on our assessment of the statement by the British representative, and then I will address the statement by the representative of the United States of America. Strangely enough, our British partners see the situation as though they acted in strict compliance with the requirements of the Convention on 12 March this year, having demanded an explanation of the chemical incident in Salisbury through A.V. Yakovenko, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to London. That is completely false. I am forced to recall that the questions posed by the British side were, essentially, serving an ultimatum to the Russian Federation. It was flatly proposed that we implicate ourselves in one of the two versions fabricated by the British themselves: either the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal was a direct act of the Russian Federation, or the Russian Federation lost control of its toxic chemical stocks. Yet note the Jesuit style of the language used by the English. Either option presumes that the Russian Federation has some undeclared stockpiles of chemical weapons. These assertions, by the way, were repeated today in the statement read by permanent representative Mr Ward of the United States of America.



First and foremost, I will say that the Russian Federation is a conscientious and responsible Party to the Convention. Back in 1992, the President of the Russian Federation issued a decree stipulating the end of all work in the military chemical field. After acceding to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Russian Federation carefully and scrupulously followed all of the obligations of this international treaty. Hundreds of OPCW inspectors oversaw this progress over many years. Finally, in 2017, we completed our chemical disarmament early, which was confirmed by our Organisation. I will emphasise it once again: the Russian Federation has fully met all of its obligations, and we have nothing to hide. We have completely destroyed all of our chemical weapons stockpiles.

And yet there is still one country that is in no hurry to achieve chemical disarmament—and that is the United States of America. The Americans, can you believe it, are referring to a lack of necessary financial resources. We have disarmed completely, and they still have a large chemical stockpile. Why aren't they saying anything about that?

Once again, I would like to return to those notorious questions that were asked of us by the British side. The Russian Federation was not provided with any facts whatsoever, or even the slightest bit of reasonable evidence. These are merely unfounded assertions. And in the absence of facts, we will continue to see this as a bald-faced lie. We waited; we hoped that our British colleagues—after their impulsive reaction when they dared to deliver an ultimatum to such a great power as the Russian Federation—would settle down and provide some kind of explanation. It's clear that at first, apparently, their minds went straight to the distant past when “the sun never set” on the British Empire. Unfortunately, our hopes were dashed.

The permanent representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland referred to the briefing at the Russian Federation's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to some statements made by individual Russian representatives. And I would like to refer to the briefing set up by the English at their embassy in Moscow. It would seem as though they invited the diplomatic body and a pool of journalists. One might have expected the British to provide some kind of explanations, just something to strengthen their accusations against the Russian Federation. But, no: again, nothing.

We are continuously being told that “Novichok” nerve gas was produced only in the Soviet Union, in the Russian Federation, and nowhere else. Now, several minutes ago, our military expert, Professor I.V. Rybalchenko made a statement and clearly explained to everyone where these types of chemicals could have been produced, and even noted in which laboratories and in which countries. This is information from open sources. Today you have received Russian reference documents. On the Internet, you can find the links in those documents and verify all of the formulas, all of the calculations. And all of that “chemistry” can be conducted at any laboratory with the proper equipment.

But back to the briefing at the British embassy in Moscow. The Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, speaking about the “Novichok”-type substance, says: “We do not have information that “Novichok” is produced anywhere besides Russia”; so basically, the “Novichok” that was used in Salisbury was made in the Russian Federation. That is some twisted logic: we have no information, so take our word for it—it's a Russian chemical. Is that even a discussion? They simply have no information.

At the same briefing, the British Ambassador is asked: why don't you want to share the results of your national investigation and the samples that you collected with the Russian Federation? His answer was: we have bitter experience from working with the Russian Federation on "the Litvinenko affair". I must say that "the Litvinenko affair" was filled with sentences peppered with "highly likely", possible, and probable. Absolutely nothing was proven. And they never did establish what happened there.

With regard to providing the Russian Federation with samples, the British Ambassador stated that the Russian side would examine them with its own national interests in mind. Just think about what he is saying! And why, in examining these samples, should we turn a blind eye to our own national interests? What, aren't the British concerned about their own national interests? That's what their reasoning sounds like. It's rubbish.

Finally, the British and American representatives here today have let slip the phrase that the motive for the crime was to have the Russian Federation exterminate spies abroad, and that it is, they say, the government's policy to eliminate traitors. At the same time, the British Ambassador in Moscow, during his briefing, referred to numerous statements by Russian leadership. To put it mildly, none of this is true, and Russian leadership has never made any such statement. I turn to the British representative, and to the American Ambassador: let them show us even one such statement. If they want to bandy words about, let them answer for it. Let them say who and where Russian leadership is carrying out a government policy to eliminate spies. It's lies.

Now the Bulgarian, American, and English Ambassadors are saying that London serves as an example of how to undertake one's obligations under the Convention. But that, to put it mildly, is a very dubious statement. Let us take a look at the Convention. Article IX stipulates that States Parties are to conduct bilateral consultations on any disputed matters. That Article is entitled "Consultations, Cooperation and Fact-Finding". The British prefer to see this not as its obligation, but as an option. Not wishing to follow the provisions of the Convention, they have come up with a new way of working: an independent verification by the OPCW Technical Secretariat of the conclusions made by the British side. There is no such provision in the Convention. The British are twisting and turning the Convention to suit themselves: they read it one way in one situation, and a different way in another. What is this? Their country is, after all, a State Party to the Convention. They should strictly follow the letter and spirit thereof. Who are they fooling when they try to pretend that their actions are based on the Convention?

The British are clearly engaged in pettifoggery, trying to spin the provisions of the Convention to their own purposes, and they are demonstrating a clear unwillingness to cooperate in the investigation of "the Skripal affair".

Frankly, the comments from the British, American, and Bulgarian representatives made me cringe. They are constantly trying to insinuate that the Russian Federation is deceiving someone, the Russian Federation is not answering questions, the Russian Federation is acting in bad faith and is behaving immorally. While listening to United States representative Mr Ward, I expected him to say that the Russian statement is "a Potemkin village". It was said with the pretence of knowing Russian history. However, in my opinion, at last year's Conference of the States Parties, he had already spoken about "the Potemkin village" "kicking" on his way country, calling it the Russian Federation's "Trojan horse". These are the types of words he throws about.

And today he used these same types of expressions to characterise our proposal, which is founded on the Convention, and which, based on common sense, no one would be able to find fault with. Now he has called this a “smokescreen”. Just think about it, it is surreal.

They are trying to give us a lesson in morality here. I will emphasise, that we cannot take lessons in morality from those whose track records leave a lot to be desired.

The representatives of Bulgaria, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America insist on the same thing: you, the Russian Federation, for the first time since World War II, launched an audacious attack in Europe with the use of chemical weapons. And yet no one has proven it. We repeatedly, clearly, and firmly stated that we have absolutely nothing to do with the incident in Salisbury.

We propose establishing what took place—they don’t want to. They don’t want to give any information. They merely continue to transmit their lies. Enough lying—and in public, even.

Allow me to ask: who was it in 1999 that orchestrated the bloody bombing in the very centre of Europe without any sanction from the United Nations? Was it us, or was it the United States of America with the British and their allies? In Serbia, these events are recalled with horror; they resulted in the deaths of hundreds of people, including children.

We all recall that in 2003, the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Colin Powell, dangled a test tube within the walls of the United Nations, accusing Saddam Hussein of producing chemical weapons, which served as grounds for invading Iraq. Tony Blair, then the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, made reference to some intelligence information, and lied, loudly proclaiming to the entire world that Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction. He did, however, repent later. Now everyone knows that both the test tube and the intelligence were fakes.

Today we recall the tragedy in the Syrian town of Khan Shaykhun that took place exactly one year ago, on 4 April 2017. We observed a minute of silence in remembrance of the victims, including all victims that died or suffered anywhere from the use of chemical weapons in Iran, Iraq, Viet Nam, and Cambodia.

And to date, no one has established what truly happened in Khan Shaykhun. I would like to reiterate that once, at the Executive Council meeting in April 2017, the United States Ambassador Mr Ward became nervous when the representative of the Russian delegation requested to display on the screen the photographs of children, who had allegedly been exposed to sarin, with dilated pupils. Our numerous questions to the heads of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM)—two British individuals—remained unanswered. We are confident that this was a flagrant provocation orchestrated by the notorious “White Helmets”, which are generously funded by the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland—we have accurate data on that point. In a word, those who orchestrated this provocation sacrificed children. The time will come when they must answer for that.

We understand altogether clearly that “the Skripal affair” is a provocation against the Russian Federation that was planned out long ago. The events in Libya are fresh in our mind, when the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and other Western countries—obsessed with the idea of overturning the Gaddafi

regime—flagrantly violated the United Nations Security Council resolution on a no-fly zone that they themselves pushed for. We were constantly told at the Security Council: a no-fly zone needs to be established urgently to save the Libyan people. We did not stand in the way, we “let” the resolution pass. And what began after that? What has Libya turned into now?

Incidentally, London has fallen into the habit of breaking the rules that it writes itself. Our colleague from Argentina can probably recall here how the British in 1982, during the Falkland campaign, treacherously torpedoed the “ARA General Belgrano” outside of the 200-mile military zone surrounding these islands, when that zone was declared by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland itself. Over 300 Argentinians perished.

The absurdity and implausibility of the accusations being made against us by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and supported by their overseas partners are reminiscent of the attempts to accuse the Soviet Union of the Kennedy assassination. Well, you know, Lee Harvey Oswald lived in the USSR for a while, and his wife was Russian. There’s your evidence!

In 2013, our Organisation became a worthy laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize. Until recently, it was the most successful mechanism in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. We all see how, over the past two and a half years, thanks to the persistent efforts of our Anglo-Saxon “friends”, the OPCW is devolving into an arena for settling political scores. In one case (“the Syrian chemical dossier”), the collective West—acts strictly in compliance with the Convention; otherwise, if it finds it inconvenient to do so, it prefers to ignore the Convention.

By the way, we heard criticism here that, it was said, the Russian Federation, without speaking with anyone, called this Executive Council meeting suddenly. Why didn’t you, the Russians, come to us, they ask? We heard predictable, hypocritical hints: why is the Russian Federation in such a hurry? Wouldn’t it have been worth it to wait for the results of the technical assistance provided from the Technical Secretariat? It will all be clear then.

One wonders—and we have already asked this question: what kind of confirmation are the British waiting for from the Technical Secretariat? That a nerve gas of the “Novichok” family—produced exclusively in the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation—was used, as asserted by Prime Minister May?

Today, Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü, when he shared updated information, confirmed that the Technical Secretariat is working on this matter within its mandate. It can provide findings only on the chemical components of the chemical that was used, without specifying where it “originated”, and moreover, without determining who is responsible for its use.

Furthermore, it has come to light that the high-level professionals from the British Porton Down laboratory have just confirmed that there is in fact some kind of chemical, but they cannot say where it was produced. We said right from the start that there are no unique markers that would make it possible to identify the origin of the toxic chemical.

The question then arises: so we wait another week, we get the results of the sample analysis with the formula of the chemical substance, and then what? We will need answers to numerous questions: how did the substance get there, how was it used, etc. The British will say once again: this substance is from the Russian Federation. When it comes to the answers

to the other questions, they will urge us to accept everything as facts believe us, people, there is nothing to sort out here.

Let us suppose that our British colleagues do not wish to work directly with us, as they see the Russian Federation as “a rogue nation”. Fine, act through the Executive Council. If you do not wish to act through the Executive Council, then let’s form an international team of experts. We took that option into account in our draft decision. If you do not want a bilateral team, then let’s put together a multilateral team. Include your American colleagues. Include your Bulgarian partners as well, they will be happy to join. We will also include someone from our partners. If you do not care for this option, then call a Conference of the States Parties. All this is provided for in the Convention. For our part, we are prepared to actively work to establish the truth.

Commenting on the statements today is like talking to a brick wall. We extend our hands to our British partners and tell them: let us work together, let us sort this out and act in line with the provisions of the Convention that covers everything. Yet they keep telling us, as was voiced just now by the Bulgarian Ambassador: “Russia has not answered any of the legitimate questions of Great Britain, and Russia refuses to cooperate to establish the truth”.

I responsibly state: the Russian Federation is open to cooperation. We are prepared for any possible options provided for in the Convention: cooperation with the OPCW and within the OPCW. What we are not ready for is a verdict of the Russian Federation’s guilt based on absolutely nothing, which, it seems, has already been issued by our British colleagues, and perhaps even suggested to them by their senior partners in the United States of America. We will never accept that verdict!

We are in favour of an honest, open, and comprehensive investigation of the incident in Salisbury, which by definition cannot be conducted without the participation of Russian experts. We will accept the results of an investigation if they are exhaustive, based on irrefutable facts, and on nothing fabricated.

Our British colleagues sit in their quiet offices at Downing Street 10 having discussions as, you know, the Russian Federation did this and the Russian Federation did that, which means it’s “highly likely” that the Russians poisoned the Skripals. Mr Johnson, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, stated no less than it turns out that President Putin personally gave the order to eliminate the Skripals. Johnson also sacrilegiously compared the upcoming World Cup in the Russian Federation with the Olympic Games in 1936 in fascist Germany! To be clear: there were no Soviet Union athletes attending the Olympic Games in 1936, but there were athletes from the United Kingdom, who met Hitler with the Nazi gesture. I have seen the photographs myself. It would be useful if the people who work with Mr Johnson might be able to show him documents before he issues his statements.

According to the assertions of several of our colleagues, they say the Russian Federation is turning everything on its head. We just heard the following: it is necessary to await the results of the OPCW experts’ work, and then, they say, we’ll meet and we’ll see.

Yet I think that our colleagues—the British and the Americans—are clearly hiding something from us. They are afraid that the truth will find its way. Many partners, dozens of delegations, told me on the margins that it is time to shed God’s light on this dark story and get to the

bottom of what took place, in an honest and impartial manner. But our colleagues from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland do not want that. For them, it is important that everything stays the way it is, and they will just declare the results of the Russian Federation's guilt.

We will never agree to be turned into the "scapegoat" for someone else's crime. We insist that our Organisation remain at the height of its position in this difficult time, and that it play a positive role. The Technical Secretariat is headed by Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü, under whose leadership the Organisation was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. He is an exceptionally experienced and educated person. He should also play his own role. We propose that the Executive Council adopt the draft decision that we prepared on conducting an investigation in line with the Convention. And we see the very important role of the Director-General in that process.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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