

THE NETHERLANDS

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PAUL van den IJSSEL PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

**AT THE FIFTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
18 APRIL 2018**

Mr. Chairperson,

[All protocol observed]

Further to the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria on behalf of the European Union, with which the Netherlands fully associates itself, my delegation wishes to make the following remarks.

We thank the DG and Mr. Blum for their briefing.

Mr. Chairperson,

As we stated in this council on April 4 and at many other occasions, the Netherlands was shocked by the attack with a military grade nerve agent on British soil. It constitutes a serious threat to our collective security and international law.

Recently we have received a report from the Technical Secretariat that confirms the British findings. We thank the TS for its work as well as the UK for the transparency they have observed in this matter.

The TS report has confirmed that we are dealing with a toxic chemical that is categorized as a non-scheduled nerve agent. The report goes on to state that the chemical was of 'high purity'. That means only a very advanced laboratory could have produced the substance and thus indicates the involvement of a state actor. An alarming conclusion indeed and one that reinforces the initial assessment of the UK with regards to the perpetrator.

The Netherlands agrees with the UK governments' assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible and that there is no plausible alternative explanation.

We reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to address the legitimate questions put to them by the UK and to stop spreading disinformation. Disinformation that also undermines the work of the Technical Secretariat and of the whole organization. We also expect that the Russian Federation provides full disclosure of the Novichok programme to the OPCW.

To conclude, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this Conference, and be published on the OPCW website and extranet.

Thank you for your attention.