



Statement by Ambassador Kevin Kelly, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the OPCW  
At the Fifty-Ninth Meeting of the Executive Council

18 April 2018

*Check against delivery*

Mr. Chairperson, Ireland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I will add the following remarks in a national capacity.

It is over nine decades since nations came together to agree the 1925 Geneva Protocol whose principles, objectives and obligations were reaffirmed by the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 1997. The Geneva Protocol noted that its prohibition on chemical and biological weapons '*shall be universally accepted as a part of International Law, binding alike the conscience and the practice of nations*'. It is this binding of conscience and practice that I wish to speak of, which recognises the importance of the universal norm against the use of chemical weapons.

Today's meeting has been convened to hear the report from the OPCW Technical Secretariat following the nerve agent attack in the UK on 4 March and on Monday we gathered to discuss the chemical weapons attack that took place in Syria on 7 April. It is apparent, unfortunately, that 20 years after the establishment of the Chemical Weapons Convention some see fit to practise the use of these insidious and indiscriminate weapons, repeatedly in some cases, and with no regard for the innocent lives that are lost or changed utterly as a consequence. The conscience of those who sanction chemical weapons attacks must weigh heavy. The use of chemical weapons threatens to weaken the long-established universal norm against their use, while serving to embolden those who wish to undermine all that we have achieved. The continued lack of cooperation, denials and obfuscations by certain States Parties serve to undermine the very Convention that we are gathered here to promote and defend on behalf of humankind.

The development and use of chemical weapons, including the use of any toxic chemicals as weapons, by anyone – state or non-state – anywhere, anytime and under any circumstances is absolutely unacceptable. The use of a chemical nerve agent in Salisbury represents a clearly illegal act. Such actions must be unequivocally condemned by the international community; we must be united in supporting a thorough investigation so that the perpetrators of these acts can be held accountable.

Mr. Chairperson,

Ireland calls upon all States Parties to the Convention to honour their commitments and obligations faithfully, and to cooperate with the OPCW in all aspects of its investigations into recent chemical weapon attacks. We fully support the work of the OPCW and recognise and greatly appreciate the continued professionalism, integrity, expertise and tireless commitment of the Director-General and the staff of the OPCW. We fully accept the report of the Technical Secretariat which verifies the findings of the United Kingdom relating to the identity of the toxic chemical used in Salisbury and express our solidarity with our nearest neighbour while wishing a full recovery for those who have been affected. We appreciate the transparency and speed with which the UK shared the report with fellow States Parties, less than 24 hours after receiving it. We commend the OPCW both in terms of its response to the UK request for support as well as the work of the Fact Finding Mission in Syria this week. I would like to take this opportunity to wish the Fact Finding Mission safe passage to Douma in their efforts to investigate recent tragic events.

Mr. Chairperson

I will close my remarks by underlining our condemnation of the use of chemical weapons and our determination to work to exclude completely the possibility of their use. We have repeatedly shared our horror at the use of chemical weapons. Indeed, our horror grows at the increasing frequency in our need to express it. Although it is difficult for us here in this room, disconnected from the situation on the ground as we are, to imagine or comprehend the pain and suffering of the victims of these attacks, be they in the UK or in Syria, it does serve to further fuel our determination that the universal norm against the use of chemical weapons be upheld unyieldingly by the international community, enabling us to bind alike the conscience and the practice of nations.

I would kindly ask that this statement be issued as an official document and placed on the OPCW public website.