



OPCW

Executive Council

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**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL TO THE
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AT ITS FIFTY-NINTH MEETING**

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

On 4 April I updated the Council on the activities carried out by OPCW experts in support of a request for technical assistance by the United Kingdom related to the incident in Salisbury (EC-M-57/DG.1, dated 4 April 2018). Since then, the Organisation received the results of the sample analysis conducted by four designated laboratories. Based on these results, the Technical Secretariat prepared a report which it transmitted to the United Kingdom and, upon their request, to all other States Parties (TAV/02/18, dated 12 April 2018). In addition, we also made available an unclassified executive summary of that report.

Today, after my statement, Mr Marc-Michael Blum, the Head of the OPCW Laboratory and leader of the technical assistance team that was deployed to the United Kingdom, will brief the States Parties on the work that it undertook. He will also explain to the Council how the network of designated laboratories operates and the importance of confidentiality in the technical arrangements that we maintain with them.

I wish to take this opportunity to emphasise the policy followed by the Secretariat with regards to public statements made by officials of individual States Parties. The Secretariat will not respond publicly to such statements even if these are critical of the OPCW's work. I do not think it is in the interest of the Organisation that the Secretariat gets involved in public discussions with States Parties. We will continue to use the Executive Council meetings or briefings to inform the States Parties about our activities and to clarify certain points which need to be addressed.

I should stress here that the network of designated labs has been of high value to the Organisation. This has been achieved through significant efforts and resources allocated by States Parties. The Technical Secretariat by providing capacity building activities and conducting regular proficiency tests has contributed to these collective endeavours.

The reliability and technical capabilities of the designated laboratories have been subject to close and rigorous scrutiny over the years. I would like to underline that the States Parties can be assured of the credibility and integrity of this network, and I am sure that the designated laboratories will continue to deliver in the same impeccable manner as they have done so to date. The technical and analytical capacity of the Organisation must be seen as one of the corner stones, and one that is supported by the science.



I would state once again as I had informed the Council on 4 April that this work of TAV was carried out independently by the Technical Secretariat without the involvement or support of other States Parties. I should also like to once again reiterate that the work of the OPCW TAV was not part of UK's internal investigation but was limited to the technical assistance provided in line with the Convention.

Thank you Mr Chairman and I will now pass the floor to Mr Marc-Michael Blum so that he can brief the Council.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Mr Chairperson,

The Technical Assistance mission carried out by the Secretariat is over. However based on the outcome of this mission in relation to the identity of the toxic chemical used in Salisbury, the Organisation will need to consider some follow up actions. I would like to inform the Council that I will soon seek the advice of the Scientific Advisory Board on the issue under discussion here today. Based on the SAB's recommendations we may consider other steps. Meanwhile the Secretariat will also propose the inclusion of the toxic chemical identified in the TAV report in the OCAD.

As it was clearly shown in the detailed and technical presentation, we should not have an iota of doubt on the reliability of the system of the OPCW Designated Laboratories. The Labs were able to confirm the identity of the chemical by applying existing, well-established procedures. There was no other chemical that was identified by the Labs. The precursor of BZ that is referred to in the public statements, commonly known as 3Q, was contained in the control sample prepared by the OPCW Lab in accordance with the existing quality control procedures. Otherwise it has nothing to do with the samples collected by the OPCW Team in Salisbury. This chemical was reported back to the OPCW by the two designated labs and the findings are duly reflected in the report.

I should like to mention here that in accordance with the established practice the Secretariat does not share the full reports of the analysis of the samples that it receives from the designated Labs with the States Parties. This practice is aimed at protecting the identity of the labs which conduct off-site analysis of samples.

As it has been explained to you, the current system is tried-and-true and we must continue to put our faith in it.

I would like to take this moment to invite States Parties to support the project to upgrade the OPCW Laboratory, which will further augment our capabilities in this field.

Thank you for your attention.

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