



OPCW

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AUSTRALIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. THE HONOURABLE BRETT MASON
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE FIFTY-NINTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson, colleagues,

It is truly extraordinary for our Executive Council to hold two extraordinary meetings in one week. For us to consider two chemical attacks on two continents occurring within a month of each other.

Chemical weapons have re-emerged. The norm against their use has weakened. Our world is more dangerous. Our lives are less secure.

We all rely on Member States' full compliance with their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, within the broader international rules-based order, to protect our countries, large and small, from the horror of chemical weapons.

The work and credibility of our Organisation, to prohibit chemical weapons, has never been more important than it is right now.

We salute the Director-General, the Technical Secretariat, and members of the investigative teams for their prompt, professional response to the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, and in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. They continue to meet this Council's highest expectations.

Mr Chairperson,

Australia welcomes the timely release by the OPCW Technical Secretariat of its findings on the Salisbury attack. The report provides independent confirmation of the United Kingdom's analysis of the toxic chemical used in the attack.

Australia expresses its full confidence in the competence, integrity, and impartiality of the OPCW's technical experts. They have conducted their investigations in a rigorous manner, with full chain of custody, in full compliance with our Convention.

Mr Chairperson,

It is important that OPCW Member States can respond to the confirmed use of a chemical weapon, without interference, including with a view to holding the perpetrators to account.



We share the United Kingdom's outrage over this attempt to commit murder using a highly toxic chemical as a weapon on British soil.

The United Kingdom has presented a compelling case for the Russian Federation's culpability. We agree there is no plausible alternative explanation.

Despite efforts to distract attention and obfuscate, and misinform, the Russian Federation still has serious questions to answer, including how a nerve agent originally developed by the Soviet Union came to be used in the United Kingdom. And why the development of this nerve agent was not included in the Russian Federation's declaration to the OPCW.

Mr Chairperson,

Let me join my colleagues and reiterate Australia's abhorrence at the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances, in violation of international law.

The renewed use of chemical weapons is the gravest challenge facing our Convention, our Organisation, and our collective resolve since the Convention came into force.

The international community must demonstrate zero tolerance for such acts.

We must not, and cannot, accept any use of such weapons.

And Mr Chairperson, those responsible must be held to account. There can be no impunity.

Mr Chairperson, colleagues, I thank you.

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