



Statement by H.E. Mr. John Neary

Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical
Weapons

At the Twentieth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the
Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons
and on their Destruction

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Mr Chairperson

As this is the first time I am taking the floor, allow me to offer our congratulations to you Ambassador Eduardo Ibarrola Nicolin on your election as Chairperson of the Conference of States Parties. I would also like to express our warm thanks and appreciation to Ambassador Vesela Mrđen Korać of Croatia for her excellent efforts as outgoing Chairperson.

Ireland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Mr Chairperson

In 2015 we marked the 100th anniversary of the first large-scale use of chemical weapons at Ypres. Since then we have made enormous progress in ridding the world of chemical weapons as a result of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the concerted efforts of States parties and the OPCW. Ireland believes all weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery remain among the most immediate and pressing global threats to humanity.

It is regrettable that a century after their first use, chemical weapons are still being used to inflict harm on combatants and civilians. In this context, we welcome the decision of the 50th Meeting of the Executive Council on 23 November which condemned all use of chemical weapons in Syria and expressed grave concern about the findings of the Fact-Finding Mission reports.

We commend the professionalism and commitment of the members of the Fact-Finding Mission. In light of ongoing allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria, it is vital that the Mission continue its work for as long as is necessary. Allow me to reaffirm Ireland's view that use of chemical weapons by anybody, anywhere and under any circumstances must be rigorously condemned.

Ireland was pleased that the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism became fully operational some weeks ago. This Mechanism will complement well the work of the Fact-Finding Mission and we encourage all stakeholders to engage positively with the JIM team.

Ireland remains concerned at the discrepancies highlighted by the Declarations Assessment Team in the initial declaration by Syria. We encourage Syria to continue to engage with the Team on the substantive issues which remain to be clarified and to provide all necessary documentation without further delay.

Ireland is also gravely concerned by the reported use of chemical weapons by non-State actors in Iraq. We welcome the OPCW's efforts to investigate these incidents and we encourage Iraq to continue to work closely with the technical experts at the OPCW to address this serious issue.

Mr Chairperson

As the completion of the destruction of known stockpiles of chemical weapons becomes a real possibility in the near future, we welcome the reflection process initiated by the Director-General Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü to consider the future of the OPCW and how it can adapt to this new situation. Ireland supports the need for the Organisation to remain strong and able to prevent the re-emergence of these dreadful weapons of mass destruction.

In this context, it will be important to recognise new developments in the use of chemistry and new types of potential chemical weapons agents. Ireland is pleased to co-sponsor the joint paper on the Aerosolisation of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes. As outlined in the paper, we would welcome discussion on developing concrete recommendations on how to address CNS-acting chemicals in a way that would significantly advance one of the OPCW's priorities – preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

Mr Chairperson

The universalisation of the Convention must remain a central objective for all States Parties. Ireland is pleased to recognise the accession of Myanmar and Angola to the Convention. We must continue to work through every channel to encourage those states that have yet to join the Convention to do so without further delay.

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

Thank You