

100th Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW

Ambassador Atiyah, Mr Chair, many congratulations on taking up your new role. The United Kingdom welcomes all the new members of the Executive Council.

In April and May, we marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. In that time the OPCW has achieved the near elimination of declared chemical weapons stockpiles and supported capacity-building efforts around the world. The Convention is bringing us closer to the goal of a world free of chemical weapons and we pay tribute to the Director General and his staff.

However, the 100th Session of the Executive Council takes place during a particularly dark period. The United Kingdom restates our condemnation of the Russian Federation's unprovoked and barbaric military assault on Ukraine, a sovereign and democratic state. The Russian government's reprehensible actions are an egregious violation of international law and the UN Charter.

Mr Chair,

We must also acknowledge that chemical weapons remain a potent threat. We have witnessed their use by the Russian state in Salisbury and in Russia against Alexey Navalny.

International investigations have so far confirmed eight separate occasions of chemical weapons use in Syria by Assad regime forces. This is an appalling record of attacks against the Syrian people. The United Kingdom will continue to press for accountability.

Syria's obstruction of the work of the Technical Secretariat and the disinformation it helps spread are deeply concerning. But the facts are clear and the OPCW has shown that it will act when states are found to have breached their legal obligations.

Syria must take the necessary steps to come into compliance with the Convention. That includes making a full declaration of its chemical weapons programme and complying in full with relevant Decisions of this Council as well as United Nations Security Council Resolution 2118.

Mr Chair,

Despite the damaging record of a few, an overwhelming majority of States Parties remain determined to ensure the success of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Fifth Review Conference offers an opportunity to chart the way ahead, and ensure the Convention delivers for the next twenty-five years and beyond. We look forward to an open and inclusive process of preparation for the Review Conference, under the able Chairmanship of Ambassador Kuusing.

As we prepare for the Review Conference next May, the United Kingdom is

looking forward to discussions with other States Parties on a range of issues.

Firstly, ensuring the verification regime is fit for the next twenty-five years and beyond.

Secondly, strengthening capacity-building efforts in support of full implementation of the Convention.

Thirdly, making sure the OPCW is ready to respond to new threats from State and non-State actors, seeking universality, and tackling re-emergence.

Fourthly, helping maintain the Technical Secretariat as an effective implementing body, with diverse, expert and high performing staff.

The new Centre for Chemistry and Technology will underpin delivery of all of these goals and the United Kingdom is proud to support this important project.

Mr Chair,

In challenging economic times, it is important that the OPCW has the resources it needs to deliver its mandate. We are pleased to have just finalised a voluntary contribution of 500,000 pounds from the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund. This will help deliver capacity-building programmes in Africa, protective assistance in Ukraine, and support to national laboratories in Africa and Latin America.

We are also pleased to see more observers able to take part in Executive Council meetings again and look forward to the full resumption of OPCW inspections and training programmes around the world.

Thank you, Mr Chair.