

Speech: 62nd Executive Council meeting of the OPCW

Thank you Madam Chair,

First, a big welcome to Ambassador Melono who takes up the role of Deputy Director General. You are well qualified for this key post at a vital time, and deserve strong support from all of us.

We, the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, have all committed to 'exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons'. In order to achieve this the technical provisions of the Convention need to be relevant and up to date.

That was why our predecessors set out very clearly – in Article 15, paragraph five of the Convention – a process for considering technical changes to the Annexes to the Convention, including the Annex on Chemicals, commonly known as the 'Schedules'. States Parties recognised from the outset that updates to the Annexes may be needed to ensure the viability and effectiveness of the Convention.

Which brings us to the substance of our meeting today, namely the joint proposal from the Netherlands, Canada and the USA to add two closely related families of chemicals to Schedule 1A of the Convention. We commend the thorough and objective review of the proposal by Technical Secretariat which confirms that:

- first: the criteria for including toxic chemicals on Schedule 1A have been met
- second: the procedural requirements of the Convention have been followed
- and third: that the proposal is consistent with the advice of the Scientific Advisory Board

We have discussed the joint proposal with the co-sponsors and I want to state very clearly that the UK fully supports it. The proposal covers the chemical weapon that was used in my country less than a year ago. It was intended to cause death and tragically it did so. The reports from the Technical Assistance Visits following the appalling events in Salisbury and Amesbury not only confirmed the identity of the substance involved, but also its high toxicity. The two closely related families of chemicals have no identified legitimate civilian use.

This Council is required to examine the proposal and notify our recommendation to all States Parties within 90 days. That deadline falls today. It is imperative that the chemical weapon used in Salisbury, together with the most closely related toxic chemicals, be included in Schedule 1A. Acting now will demonstrate the resolve of States Parties to address new types of chemical warfare agents and deter further use. I call on other Council members to support the draft decision in front of us.

Thank you Chair.