

Speech: “You don’t recruit an arsonist to put out a fire. You especially don’t do that when the fire is one they caused.”

Thank you very much Madam President, and thank you for scheduling this meeting today at short notice following the announcements in the United Kingdom yesterday.

When the Council last met on this issue on 18 April, I undertook to update the Council in the light of significant developments. My Prime Minister’s full statement to Parliament has been circulated to the Security Council as document SC2/2018/814. As the British Prime Minister announced yesterday in Parliament, the United Kingdom has reached a significant conclusion in the Salisbury CW investigation. I’ll come to that later if I may, but first, a brief summary of what happened in Salisbury earlier this year.

On Sunday, 4 March, Sergei Skirpal and his daughter Yulia were found unconscious on a bench in the city centre after being poisoned by a Novichok nerve agent. Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey, a Wiltshire police officer, was also seriously ill after having been exposed to a nerve agent. Following this attack, the United Kingdom notified the OPCW, invited them to confirm the identity of the substance involved, and we briefed members of the Security Council.

The OPCW’s independent, expert laboratories confirmed the UK’s identification of the Novichok nerve agent.

Madam President, the Skirpals are thankfully recovering. But on 30 June this year, 44 year-old mother of three Dawn Sturgess fell ill in the nearby town of Amesbury after being exposed to Novichok. She sadly died on 8 July. Her partner, Charlie Rowley was also exposed to the nerve agent and he became seriously ill. Police have identified that Sturgess and Rowley came into contact with a counterfeit perfume bottle which had been discarded in Salisbury. Tests of this bottle following its recovery by police confirmed it contained a significant amount of highly lethal Novichok nerve agent.

On 4 September, the OPCW’s independent, expert laboratories have again confirmed the UK’s identification of the Novichok nerve agent with a very high level of purity and to remind Council members, the very high level of purity means that it will have been made by a state.

The inquiry into the Amesbury incident has now been formally linked by the police with the attempted murder of the Skirpals. The OPCW independent experts have confirmed the identifications as Novichok nerve agent, and it is the exact same chemical that was used in both attacks.

Madam President, it stretches credulity the identification of such nerve agent twice in close proximity to be a coincidence. We have previously shared with the Council the information about the Russian foliant programme from 2000, but to recap briefly, there was a development of Novichok outside the Chemical Weapons Convention and Russian agents were trained in assassination techniques, including the use of such agents on door handles.

Madam President, in the UK, the police are independent of government and they have been conducting a painstaking and forensic investigation. This investigation has involved around 250 detectives who have trawled through more than 11,000 hours of CCTV footage and have taken more than 1,400 statements. Working around the clock, they have carried out painstaking and methodical work to ascertain exactly which individuals were responsible and the methods they used to carry out this attack.

This evidence has been independently reviewed by the Crown Prosecution Service, and they have concluded there is a sufficient basis to bring charges. We have thus independently concluded that there is enough evidence to bring charges against two Russian nationals for the following crimes: the conspiracy to murder Sergei Skirpal; the attempted murder of Sergei and Yulia Skirpal and Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey; the use and possession of Novichok; and causing grievous bodily harm with intent to Yulia Skirpal and Nick Bailey. The investigation into the murder of Dawn Sturgess remains ongoing.

Madam President, the evidence reveals the following. It shows the arrival of two individuals traveling under the names of Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov who go to the UK from Russia. CCTV and other evidence records their travel to and from Salisbury and crucially, there are images which clearly places them in the vicinity of the Skirpal's house at 11:58 A.M. on Sunday, 4 March. This was moments before the attack took place, which involved placing the substance on the Skirpal's front door handle. Madam President, should any Council member wish, we can share copies of those meetings.

Further, testing of the hotel the pair stayed in in London revealed the presence of traces of the Novichok substance in their hotel room.

Based on a thorough analysis of our intelligence, the UK government has concluded that the two individuals named by the police investigation are in fact officers from the Russian Military Intelligence Service, also known as the GRU. This is a body of the Russian state.

Madam President, we previously when we briefed the Council before, attributed responsibility to Russia on the basis of technical means, operational experience – and I recall the case of Litvenenko here – and motive. Russian statements have said that former Russian agents are, if you like, fair game for assassination. These arguments have now been firmly reinforced by the clear evidence of the involvement of identified Russian nationals travelling to the UK from Moscow and returning there on Russian passports. This evidence has been sufficient for our independent prosecuting authorities to bring criminal charges in relation to the Salisbury attack and to issue European arrest warrants.

Madam President, these two individuals are no longer in the United Kingdom. Were they with us, these two suspects within UK jurisdiction would be liable to arrest in a clear basis in law for their attempted murder crimes.

It is clear, Madam President that the Russian state does not permit the extradition of Russian nationals, and I understand that this is a prohibition in the Russian Constitution. So therefore, with respect to these two individuals, we have obtained a European arrest warrant and we will shortly the issue an Interpol red notice. Should either of these individuals ever travel gain outside Russia, we will take every step open to us to detain them, to extradite them, and to bring them to face justice in the United Kingdom.

And we responded at the time to Russian behaviour robustly. The Council will recall that we were joined by 28 partners and NATO in expelling more than 150 Russian intelligence officers. This was a proportionate and direct response to deter and degrade Russia's ability to conduct further operations in the future and to reduce her ability to use the GRU network to cause our citizens harm.

Madam President, we have clear evidence of Russian state involvement in what happened in Salisbury and the use of CW. This is reckless involvement, endangering the lives of many citizens and reckless involvement endangering the universal prohibition on the use of CW.

Madam President, as the Council has discussed before, there is an established pattern of malign Russian behaviour perpetrated by military and intelligence agencies overseas. This was shown in the October 2016 coup attempt in Montenegro, shown in the June 2017 Notpetya a cyber attack which killed an estimated \$1.2 billion of damage worldwide, and it has been shown in other cyber attacks.

The GRU has time and again been responsible for Russian interference in other countries' affairs, and most recently, we saw US indictments of GRU individuals in relation to the 2016 Democratic National Committee PAC. Now, in the light of the evidence from Salisbury, we see that GRU activity also encompasses the use of illegal military grade nerve agent on European soil.

Madam President, P5 members bear a particular responsibility to uphold global norms and international law. All the more so where weapons of mass destruction is concerned. One P5 member has not upheld these important norms. One P5 member has undertaken a pattern of behaviour which showed that they tried to murder the Skirpals. They played dice with the lives of the people of Salisbury. They work in a parallel universe where the normal rules of international affairs are inverted. This is a direct challenge, Madam President, to the rules-based international system, which has kept all of us safe, including Russia, since 1945. In the face of such behaviour, the international community needs to continue to defend the laws, norms and institutions that safeguard our citizens against chemical weapons and safeguard them against the threat of hostile, foreign interference. This is why the British Prime Minister yesterday set out the importance of using transparent multilateral mechanisms to identify and hold malign actors to

account.

Allow me to summarize the steps that we believe should now be taken by the international community. We need to work together to strengthen the Chemical Weapons Convention against the use of CW round the world and which we saw most recently, violated on the streets of the United Kingdom.

We need to build further the OPCW's capability to attribute the use of chemical weapons. There can be no place for such incidents as Salisbury again.

We need to shine a light on the use of state agencies to undermine the rule of law and interfere in the domestic lives of other countries' citizens.

And we need to make best use of our established methods, including sanctions, in curbing threats to our societies and our ways of life.

As Theresa May emphasized yesterday, the United Kingdom has no quarrel with the Russian people. We continue to hold out hope that we will once again enjoy a strong partnership with the government of this great nation. We have fought alongside Russian troops in the Second World War. But we will respond robustly when our security is threatened, when the lives of our citizens are endangered, and when the norms and rules of international law and the international system are flouted in such a brazen and reckless manner.

We stand with our partners and allies. We are determined to continue to disrupt together the hostile activities of foreign intelligence networks on our territories. We will uphold the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We will protect our citizens and we will defend ourselves from all forms of maligned state activity directed against us and our societies.

Thank you Madam President.

Further Statement by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at the Security Council briefing on Salisbury

Thank you very much Madam President and thank you to colleagues for their views and for colleagues' expressions of solidarity and support and for colleagues who repeated their revulsion at the use of CW wherever, whenever it occurs.

I just want to make very clear that the United Kingdom shares that position about bolstering the international prohibition on the use of CW.

I was asked a number of questions, Madam President, so with your permission I will respond briefly. I was asked about the investigation. I would just like to recall for colleagues that in the United Kingdom the police are independent of government. The investigation has been independent; the one into the murder of Dawn Sturgess, which is ongoing, is independent. We believe it is methodical and comprehensive.

I was asked about inconsistencies, Madam President, in the evidence identifying the two Russian individuals as Russian GRU operatives. We have

CCTV footage, Madam President. We are happy to share those images with colleagues. To take one instance, the Russian Ambassador mentioned that there was a timestamp in the same corridor for both individuals. I don't know if the Ambassador has been to Gatwick airport. We have been to Gatwick airport. There are multiple identical corridors through which people can go. This is what happened to the two Russians. We are confident, Madam President, in our evidence, and I am very happy to talk to any colleague or indeed any UN member of the General Assembly who has doubts about the evidence is very welcome to come and have a briefing at the British Mission.

I was asked also about cooperation with the Russian authorities. I would like to recall for Council colleagues that when this episode first happened in March, my government went to the Russian authorities and asked for their cooperation. We were given a reply that the request for cooperation was null and void. We would have been happy to collaborate with the Russian authorities at that time. We have indicated our willingness to do so since that point, but in fact what we have seen is a diversion into avenues that are not relevant to this particular case. I think that's a great pity, Madam President.

The Russians have also asked us if they could join the investigation once it was underway. I've said before in this chamber, but I repeat: you don't recruit an arsonist to put out a fire. You especially don't do that when the fire is one they caused.

I was asked about GRU operatives using fake names. The names may be fake, but the crimes are real. The time for lies and discrimination has passed and it is now time for truth and accountability.

We have not assumed that the Russians are guilty. We have done an investigation. The assumption of guilt over innocence may happen in the Russian judicial system, Madam President. It does not happen in the United Kingdom's. But I do think there is an interesting question for the Russian authorities as to whether the GRU operatives were incompetent in what they did to leave traces or whether they were rogue. And I think that's an important angle to think about.

We were accused of not granting consular access to the Skripals. In fact, we did, as I've told the Council; we did, Madam President, pass on the details from the Russian Consulate in London to Yulia Skripal, and it was her wishes that we followed in all subsequent contact. Yulia, I'm glad to say, is making a good recovery. We have had no other thought in our dealings with her than her welfare and her wishes.

Madam President, we are now up to some 37 accounts from Russia as to why and how Salisbury took place. I think none hold water. We believe that the evidence we have presented speaks for itself, but I repeat, I am very happy to give any member of the United Nations who would wish a briefing on that.

I think we need to recall that a woman has died, two people have narrowly escaped death, a whole city was placed at risk and the global non-proliferation CW regime has also been placed at risk. I would hope that the

Russians would respect the Council, engage on the facts and accept the compelling evidence of Russian complicity in this crime.

As regards to the British allegations against Russia over Douma: I think again, Madam president, this shows that for many Russian authorities, they work in a parallel universe where facts and international norms are inverted. We abhor the use of chemical weapons. We take our responsibilities under the Chemical Weapons Convention extremely seriously. We call on the Syrian authorities and the Russian authorities who work with them not to use chemical weapons against their own people, not to repeat Eastern Ghouta and Douma. But as you and our French colleagues and the United Kingdom have made clear, we will uphold our international responsibilities and we will uphold the international commitments and obligations that the international community has laid down.

If I may conclude, Madam President, the world is poorer that Russia, a P5 member, will not join us in doing precisely that to uphold the international order.

Thank you, Madam President.