



**NEW ZEALAND STATEMENT TO THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF
THE CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CHEMICAL
WEAPONS CONVENTION**

Delivered by Mr Heath Fisher

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Mr Chairperson,

From the outset, let me assure you of New Zealand's full support and cooperation. We wish to also register our thanks to the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat for their preparations for this meeting.

New Zealand firmly supports efforts to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction. Although we're a country in the South Pacific, New Zealand troops were killed in chemical weapons attacks here in this part of the world. We view the Chemical Weapons Convention as a signal achievement of the world's disarmament efforts and we are fully committed to the Convention's objectives. The destruction of over 96% of the world's chemical weapons stockpiles since it entered into force is clear evidence of its importance in enhancing global security.

But these achievements are now under threat. The recent spate of chemical weapons attacks in different parts of the world has thrown into doubt commitments made by states parties under the Convention to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons.

New Zealand has strongly condemned chemical weapons attacks in Syria. We remain deeply disappointed by the veto cast against the extension of the mandate of the UN/OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism to attribute responsibility for these actions. We have condemned the nerve agent attack in Malaysia last year, and the attack in Salisbury in March. The use of chemical weapons by non-state actors in Syria and Iraq is a further appalling example that the international norm against the use of chemical weapons is clearly under threat.

We are deeply concerned about the impunity with which the perpetrators seem to have carried out these attacks, and what lessons others may draw from this.

Mr Chairperson,

New Zealand condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances. However, meeting here and merely repeating those words is not enough. Action to uphold the Convention and strengthen its implementation is vital and urgent. New Zealand therefore joined the call for this special session. .

The integrity of the Chemical Weapons Convention depends on each and every State Party fulfilling its obligations in good faith, and addressing issues of non-compliance. New Zealand strongly believes in ensuring accountability for any violation of the Convention. The OPCW has an important role to play in the attribution of chemical weapons use. It is important that States Parties affirm this.

The OPCW should not be a static organisation, and it must continue to evolve in response to global issues and challenges of the day. We therefore co-sponsored the draft Decision of the Conference put forward by the United Kingdom which reaffirms the need for perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks to be identified, and outlines a mechanism for the OPCW to assist with attribution. These are crucial elements for any decision text and will help strengthen both the OPCW and the global norm against chemical weapons use.

In the current circumstances, it is not tenable to support any decision lacking such elements or any decision which would lead to the undermining of the OPCW.

New Zealand is a strong supporter of the OPCW and supports the Organisation across the full spectrum of its work. It is particularly important that it should serve all States Parties, particularly those who require assistance to fulfil their obligations under the Convention and enjoy its full benefits. We welcome the proposal to consider ways to strengthen the Secretariat's functions, including its work on verification and assistance.

Mr Chairperson,

It is almost 120 years since states first met here in The Hague in an attempt to outlaw chemical warfare. Today we need to ensure that we come together again to respond to the recent spate of chemical attacks, so that these are not allowed to undermine the achievements of the Convention we have all worked so hard to build. It is time to strengthen its implementation and, in this regard, New Zealand is pleased to cosponsor the draft Decision tabled by the United Kingdom. We call on all members to support it.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.