



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF CANADA, AUSTRALIA, AND NEW ZEALAND (CANZ) AT THE SIXTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Canada, Australia, and New Zealand thank you for calling this meeting and the Director-General for his briefing. The matter of Syria and possible remaining chemical weapons is of top importance to our governments.

The unimaginable hardship and horror the Syrian people have endured as a result of chemical weapons is front of mind for us today. We, the States Parties of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), need to ensure such devastation does not occur again.

Syria's incomplete and inaccurate initial declaration under the CWC has been the subject of discussion for over a decade. The gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies in Syria's declaration always meant that there was a risk of undeclared chemical weapons, precursor materials and production facilities in Syria.

Director-General, your team has been professional, impartial, and tenacious in ensuring that these gaps were not ignored, despite a lack of cooperation from the former Syrian government.

Chair, we are now in a situation of uncertainty. The new governance arrangements within Syria are not yet clear. Nor is it clear what weapons, precursor chemicals or production facilities may still exist, where they are, and who – if anyone – has control of them. The risk that these dangerous weapons could fall into the hands of non-state actors is real, as made clear by the Investigation and Identification Team's (IIT) fourth report. Chemical weapons could again be used in Syria, or they could be moved to conflicts elsewhere.

While we understand the fluid political and security situation, we cannot ignore the urgent threat posed by unsecured chemical weapons. CANZ therefore calls on the transitional government in Syria to prioritise turning over all records related to Syria's chemical weapons programme. Syria has an obligation to comply with the CWC that includes extending its full cooperation to the Technical Secretariat (TS), including the IIT. We call on all relevant parties to do everything they can to find and safely contain any chemical weapons.

The recent developments in Syria do not end the fight against impunity. As reflected in the OPCW leper Declaration, we reiterate our strong conviction that perpetrators should be held accountable.

The current situation is risky, but the OPCW was built to address these kinds of risks. Today we see the wisdom of that decision. You have our full and enduring support for the work ahead.