



Statement by Ms Lorraine Cooke, Deputy Permanent Representative of Ireland to the
OPCW

At the Fifty-Seventh Meeting of the Executive Council

4 April 2018

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Mr. Chairperson, Director-General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, Ireland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Ireland's absolute condemnation of the chemical nerve agent attack on 4 March, and to offer our full solidarity and support to the United Kingdom, as expressed by our Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and our Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Mr Chairperson,

Ireland firmly believes in a rules-based system of international affairs. During the Conference of the States Parties of the OPCW in November, we noted that the repeated use of chemical weapons in Syria threatens to weaken the long-established universal norm against their use and serves to embolden those who wish to undermine all that we have achieved. I regret that this assessment has proven accurate and that the issue of chemical weapons again warrants global attention. Today we are speaking about another incident that has taken place, this time on our closest neighbour's soil.

The use of a chemical nerve agent in Salisbury represents a clearly illegal act. The development and use of chemical weapons, including the use of any toxic chemicals as weapons, by anyone – state or non-state – anywhere, anytime and under any circumstances is absolutely unacceptable. Such actions must be unequivocally condemned by the international community and those responsible held accountable.

EU leaders, including our Taoiseach or Prime Minister, have unanimously agreed with the UK government's assessment that the Russian Federation is highly likely to have been responsible for the attack in Salisbury on 4 March 2018, and that there is no plausible alternative explanation.

We urge all States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to honour their commitments and obligations faithfully. We urge the Russian Federation to engage in good faith with the OPCW and we look forward to the formal conclusions of the OPCW report expected shortly.

Mr Chairperson,

Chemical weapons are barbaric. Let us not be reserved in our condemnation of the attack in the UK nor in our commitment to seek justice for those who have suffered. We must be united in supporting a thorough investigation so that the perpetrators of this crime can be held accountable.

I will conclude by sharing our wish for a full recovery for the victims of the attack on 4 March and, mindful that today marks the one year anniversary of the sarin attacks in Khan Shaykhun, I would also like to extend our thoughts to the victims and survivors, past and present, whose lives have been irrevocably impacted by the use of chemical weapons, and to whom we all share a duty in striving to ensure we meet our objectives and secure our goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

I would kindly ask that this statement be issued as an official document and placed on the OPCW public website.

Thank you.