

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

77<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly - First Committee

## Statement by Canada – Thematic Statement #2:

### Other WMD

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New York, \_\_\_\_\_ October 2022

[Mister/Madam] Chair,

The legal frameworks established by the international community to ban the possession, development, and use of chemical and biological weapons are increasingly being undermined.

In September of this year, States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) met at the behest of the Russian Federation to hear baseless accusations about allegedly inappropriate biological activities conducted by the United States in Ukraine. We listened attentively to these accusations, and paid equally close attention to the responses provided by the Ukrainian and American delegations.

Based on the nature and credibility of the materials provided, we reached the unambiguous conclusion that activities supported by the United States in Ukraine were fully consistent with the BTWC, and that

Russia's allegations are baseless, disingenuous, and damaging to the integrity of the Convention.

Russia manufactured and misrepresented longstanding and legitimate cooperation between the United States and Ukraine to support its disinformation charge that they violated the BTWC. In this regard, it is ironic that Russia itself was an active participant in very similar activities as a former member of both the International Science and Technology Center and the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons of & Materials of Mass Destruction. Through these initiatives, Canada supported many international assistance projects at bio labs in Russia, including at facilities implicated in the Soviet Union's offensive bioweapons program, that involved peaceful scientific collaboration similar to that Russia had called into question in Ukraine.

Russia's blatant disinformation is not limited to biological weapons.

To justify President Putin's illegal and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine, Russia has also accused Ukraine of developing chemical weapons, and has alleged that Ukrainian forces are committing chemical provocations by sabotaging civilian chemical industry. Russia has gone so far as to imply that inspectors from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons could be involved in staging chemical attacks in order to blame Russia.

[Mister/Madam] Chair,

Commented [FP-2]: Transition to French.

These allegations are false. Ukraine is, and has always been, in full compliance with the CWC.

In stark contrast, Russia has failed to satisfactorily explain the use of a Novichok in the attempted assassinations of Sergei Skripal in 2018 and Alexei Navalny in 2020. It has been two years since Mr. Navalny was poisoned on Russian soil with a Russian-made nerve agent. No attempt at an investigation has been made by Russian authorities. This causes us to doubt Russia's compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The intent of Russian disinformation is clear: to undermine decades of our collective effort to eliminate two entire categories of weapons of mass destruction.

This blatant behaviour is on top of Russian actions in the OPCW and the UN Security Council to shield the Assad regime for any accountability for its numerous CWC violations.

Syria's violations of the CWC are as flagrant as they are plentiful. They have deployed chemical weapons after its declared stockpiles were verifiably destroyed, and has now all but stopped working with the Technical Secretariat to clarify serious outstanding concerns in its declaration. It is our collective duty to insist that Syria continue working with the Technical Secretariat.

Chair, the Review Conferences for both of these Conventions are coming soon. We sincerely hope that these events will offer the opportunities to strengthen the BTWC and the CWC, with a view toward bolstering these regimes and ensuring that neither of these categories of weapon of mass destruction are used again.

Hope alone, however, does not guarantee success. As such, we must redouble our efforts to strengthen other critical chemical and biological weapons non-proliferation mechanisms, including the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction and the United Nations Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons (UNSGM).

Concerning the UNSGM, current events highlight the imperative of preserving the integrity and independence of the mechanism, while taking active steps to better enable and equip the mechanism to respond if called upon.