



2025 UNGA First Committee

**Thematic Cluster statement: Other Weapons of Mass
Destruction**

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22 October 2025

Thank you, Chair.

A core and enduring pillar of New Zealand's foreign policy is our unwavering opposition to the development, possession, and use of all weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons. These indiscriminate and inhumane weapons have no place in the modern world.

Despite the overall success of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we are now faced with the deeply alarming prospect of new use of chemical weapons.

We are gravely concerned by reports of Russia's use of riot control agents and other chemical substances in its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. Three Technical Assistance Visits by the OPCW confirmed the repeated use of riot control agents as a method of warfare, which the Convention strictly prohibits. We have also seen deeply troubling allegations of the systematic use of more toxic substances, such as chloropicrin.

We condemn these actions in the strongest terms and call on Russia to cease its use of chemical weapons, comply fully with its obligations, and cooperate transparently with the OPCW. We are moreover concerned that the use of chemical weapons against Ukraine is not an isolated incident but part of an escalating pattern.

Chair,

New Zealand welcomes the Syrian interim authorities' renewed engagement with the OPCW. While we recognise the difficult conditions on the ground, this moment presents a vital opportunity to eliminate remaining chemical weapons in Syria once and for all. We urge the interim authorities to continue to cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat to ensure full and verified destruction of all chemical weapons and related infrastructure. Sustained momentum is essential.

Chair,

New Zealand welcomed the establishment of the Working Group on Strengthening the BWC at the Ninth Review Conference. The Group's work is vital to ensuring the Convention's continued relevance in the face of rapid scientific and technological advances.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the BWC's entry into force. As we reflect, we must also ensure that the Convention is equipped to meet the challenges of the next fifty years.

Chair,

New Zealand will continue to advocate for the universalisation and strengthening of the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions. We remain committed to achieving a world free from weapons of mass destruction.

Thank you.