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Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8203rd meeting

Wednesday, 14 March 2018, 3.25 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Van Oosterom	(Netherlands)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

Agenda

Letter dated 13 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/218)

18-07096 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 13 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/218)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/218, which contains a letter dated 13 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I thank you, Sir, for arranging this urgent meeting of the Security Council today to give the United Kingdom the opportunity to update Council colleagues on our investigation into a nerve agent attack in Salisbury.

On Sunday, 4 March, Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia Skripal were found in the town centre, slipping out of consciousness on a public bench, and were taken to hospital by our emergency services, where they remain in very serious condition. Investigations by world-leading experts of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory at Porton Down, accredited by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), discovered that they had been exposed to a nerve agent. British police officer Nick Bailey was also exposed and remains in hospital in serious condition.

Hundreds of British citizens have been potentially exposed to this nerve agent in what was an indiscriminate and reckless act against the United Kingdom. We have deployed our military to secure and decontaminate numerous sites. The police continue an exhaustive, wide-scale investigation. Through those investigations, we have concluded that Mr. Skripal and his daughter were poisoned with a Novichok — a military-grade nerve agent of a type developed by Russia. It is not a weapon that can be manufactured by non-State actors. It is so dangerous that it requires the highest-grade State laboratories and expertise.

Based on the knowledge that Russia has previously produced this agent, and combined with Russia's record of conducting State-sponsored assassinations, including against former intelligence officers whom it regards as legitimate targets, the United Kingdom Government concluded that it was highly likely that Russia was responsible for this reckless act. We saw only two plausible explanations. Either this was a direct attack by Russia on my country, or Russia had lost control of a military-grade nerve agent that it had developed.

We requested the Russian Government to provide an explanation by the end of Tuesday, 13 March, on how this Russian-produced nerve agent could have been deployed in Salisbury. It has provided no credible explanation, which could suggest that it had lost control of its nerve agent. We therefore have no alternative but to conclude that the Russian State was responsible for the attempted murder of Mr. Skripal, his daughter and police officer Nick Bailey, and for threatening the lives of other British citizens in Salisbury. This was no common crime. It was an unlawful use of force and a violation of Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations — the basis of the international legal order.

The United Kingdom is proud to have been one of the States that played an integral role in drafting the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), a landmark piece of international law. We are therefore dismayed that Russia has suggested that our response fails to meet the requirements of the Convention. Article VII of the Convention calls on States parties to implement the Convention under their own legislation. The United Kingdom has enacted the Chemical Weapons Act in order to fully comply with this obligation. That legislation, together with relevant criminal law, is now guiding our investigation into this incident, as the Convention was designed to ensure.

This was an attack on United Kingdom soil. Under the Convention, we have the right to lead our response, engaging the OPCW and others, as appropriate. On 8 March, the United Kingdom formally notified the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW that a chemical attack had taken place on United Kingdom soil.

The Russian Federation has complained that we are not acting under article IX of the Convention. On the contrary, on 12 March, once it became clear to us that the United Kingdom had been attacked, the

Foreign Secretary summoned the Russian Ambassador and sought an explanation from his Government, as article IX clearly sets out we have the right to do. We have received no meaningful response. It is therefore Russia that is failing to comply with the provisions of the Convention. The Council should not fall for their attempt to muddy the waters. In addition, the United Kingdom has welcomed the offer of technical assistance from the Director-General of the OPCW. We have invited the Technical Secretariat to independently verify our analysis. We are making every effort to expedite that process.

Let us now turn to the part of the Chemical Weapons Convention that Russia is not talking about, which requires States parties to declare chemical weapons stockpiles and facilities that have been used at any time since 1946 to produce chemical weapons. Chemical weapons were to be verifiably destroyed and production facilities destroyed or converted, subject to approval, within 10 years of the entry into force of the Convention. Russia completed the destruction of its declared stockpile in September 2017, 10 years later than required by the Convention and five years beyond the single five-year extension period. Russia did not declare Novichok agents or the production facilities associated with them, as it was required to do under the Convention. No development facilities were declared. Yet we know from the testimony of the Russian scientist Vil Mirzayanov that Novichok agents were developed as part of the Soviet Union's offensive chemical warfare programme and that they were inherited by the Russian Federation. Such facilities associated with that programme should have been declared under the CWC. Even today, a Russian politician said that Russia had destroyed the Novichok nerve gas.

From all I have said, we can conclude that Russia is in serious breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention through its failure to declare the Novichok programme. That fact alone means that the Security Council should discount any arguments it hears about the possibility of other countries having inherited that technology. Had Russia declared and destroyed its own programme, there might have been some truth to that.

On 4 March, a weapon so horrific that it is banned from use in war was used in a peaceful city in my country. That was a reckless act, carried out by people who disregard the sanctity of human life and who are indifferent to whether innocent people are caught up in their attacks. They either did not care that the weapon used would be traced back to them or mistakenly believed that they could cover their tracks.

Russian officials and media channels have repeatedly threatened those whom they consider traitors even after the attack on 4 March. Russia has a history of State-sponsored assassinations, including that of Alexander Litvinenko, who was poisoned by radioactive materials in my country a decade ago. Russia has a history of interfering in other countries — whether the failed coup in Montenegro, repeated cyberattacks on other States or seeking to influence the democratic processes of other countries. Russia has a history of flouting international law, most egregiously in Crimea, eastern Ukraine, and Georgia. Russia shows disregard for civilian life. We all remember Flight MH-17, shot down by Russian proxies supplied with Russian weapons. In its repeated protection of the use of chemical weapons by Al-Assad, Russia has shown that it has different standards when it comes to the use of those terrible substances.

We have not jumped to conclusions. We have carried out a thorough and careful investigation, which continues. We are asking the OPCW to independently verify the nerve agent used. We have offered Russia the chance to explain but Russia has refused. We have therefore concluded that the Russian State was involved and we have taken certain measures in response. In taking such measures, we have been clear that we have no disagreement with the people of Russia, who have been responsible for so many great achievements throughout history. It is the reckless acts of their Government that we oppose.

We are grateful for the support of so many countries around the world. We will come back to the Council as the investigations make more progress and will continue to keep it informed. We have already heard the attacks and threats that Russia has made over the past few days. We know that there will be more to come. That is how Russia has acted in every other case where it has been caught flouting international law — denial, distraction and threats. That is what Russia does. However, we will not allow such threats to deter us. We will not weaken our resolve. We will stand firm, confident in our democracy, our rule of law and the freedom of our people. We will stand by the values that are shared by the overwhelming majority of those on the Council at the United Nations. We ask them today to stand by us.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I thank my British colleagues for calling this important meeting.

We are here today to discuss the use of a chemical weapon by one Council member on the territory of another Council member. Let me make one thing clear from the very beginning — the United States stands in absolute solidarity with Great Britain. The United States believes that Russia is responsible for the attack on two people in the United Kingdom, using a military-grade nerve agent. Dozens of civilians and first responders were also exposed. Police officer Nick Bailey was the first to arrive on the scene and remains hospitalized in serious condition. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims of that atrocious crime.

No two nations enjoy a stronger bond than that between the United States and the United Kingdom. Ours is truly a special relationship. When our friends in Great Britain face a challenge, the United States will always be there for them. Alone, Russia's crime is worthy of the Council's action. However, this is not an isolated incident. The assassination attempt in Salisbury is part of an alarming increase in the use of chemical weapons. Last year, the North Korean regime used the nerve agent VX to publicly assassinate Kim Jong Un's brother in a Malaysian airport. In Syria, the Al-Assad regime continues to kill its own people with chemical weapons years after the Council adopted resolution 2118 (2013) to remove the threat from Syria's chemical weapons programme. When the Security Council created a mechanism to investigate chemical weapons attacks, the mechanism was targeted when it began to shine a spotlight on Al-Assad's role in killing his own people.

A growing concern in all that dangerous and destabilizing activity is Russia. Russia failed to ensure that Syria destroyed its chemical weapons programme. Russia put an end to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism when it found that Al-Assad was liable for chemical attacks. Russia used its veto to shield Al-Assad five times last year. It has also provided cover for Syria at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague.

The Russians complained recently that we criticize them too much. If the Russian Government stopped using chemical weapons to assassinate its enemies and helping its Syrian allies to use chemical weapons to kill Syrian children, and if it cooperated with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons by turning over all information related to this nerve agent, we would stop talking about it. We take no pleasure in having to constantly criticize Russia but we need Russia to stop giving us so many reasons to do so.

Russia must fully cooperate with the United Kingdom's investigation and come clean about its own chemical weapons programme. Russia is a permanent member of the Security Council. Under the Charter of the United Nations, it is entrusted with upholding international peace and security. It must account for its actions.

If we do not take immediate, concrete measures to address this now, Salisbury will not be the last place we see chemical weapons used. They could be used here in New York or in cities of any country that sits on the Council. This is a defining moment. Time and time again, Member States say that they oppose the use of chemical weapons under any circumstance. Now, one member stands accused of using chemical weapons on the sovereign soil of another member. The credibility of the Council will not survive if we fail to hold Russia accountable.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the United Kingdom for having taken the initiative to convene this important meeting and for the information it has provided on the situation following the attempted assassination of two Russian citizens on its soil on 4 March in Salisbury.

At the outset, allow me to reiterate to our British friend and ally all the support that was expressed yesterday and today by our highest authorities following an unacceptable attack, which President Macron condemned without reservation. In the name of the cardinal values we share — first and foremost the rule of law and the commitment to the principles of peace and security of which the Council is the guardian and guarantor — I would like to offer the United Kingdom the full support and solidarity of France. There can be no ambiguity with regard to our position on this.

Let us be clear. This assassination attempt in a public place using a military-grade toxic nerve agent, as reported to us, and which has affected other civilians in British territory, is totally unacceptable. Theresa May spoke today in the House of Commons and stated that Russia is responsible in this attack. We have full confidence in the British investigation to shed light on the precise circumstances of this use of a chemical

weapon. It is essential that those who are at the origin of the use of this chemical weapon be clearly identified and prosecuted, and that all appropriate responses be made as soon as possible to the issues raised by the United Kingdom in this investigation.

Let us make no mistake. The facts and the issues at stake are extremely serious. The ban on the use of chemical weapons lies at the heart of the non-proliferation regime that underpins our system of collective security, as created and enshrined by the Council and all its members.

The haphazard re-emergence of these barbaric weapons with deadly consequences, which can be seen not only in their recurrent use in Syria and the Middle East, but also in Asia and now in Europe, cannot be tolerated. It flouts the principles that form the basis of peace and security; it undermines the non-proliferation architecture, built stone by stone over the course of decades; and it calls into question strategic stability. We have repeatedly warned the Council of the risk of the re-emergence of these weapons, their proliferation to all types of actors, and the threat this situation poses to the collective security system that we have gradually built together.

Let us be very aware that we have reached a new phase — that of the use of a substance that was never declared to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the use of which is prohibited by the Convention, in a public place on the territory of a European country. France will never accept impunity for those who use or develop toxic agents. In that regard, we recall our full support for existing institutions, in particular the OPCW. That is also the reason why France launched an international partnership in January, aimed at supporting existing instruments in the fight against impunity in the use of these weapons.

We must remain more mobilized than ever in the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the impunity of those who intend to use them. It is a priority and a major responsibility for all of us, as well as a responsibility of the Security Council, and we will be judged on it. In that respect, France affirms its resolute commitment to that end, alongside its partners and allies, within the Council and in all circumstances that require it.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Security Council is meeting to discuss the use of chemical weapons. Regardless of the wording of the agenda item that we are discussing today, be it "Letter from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom" or "Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction", we believe that this is an issue of concern. Attempted assassination is a dangerous crime that has an impact on the security and safety of civilians and could undermine relations among Member States.

The State of Kuwait holds a principled and firm position condemning the use, production, acquisition, stockpiling or retention of chemical weapons, as well as their direct or indirect transfer. This position is based on article I of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We call on all Member States that have ratified the Convention to adhere to its provisions and eliminate all their stockpiles of toxic chemical material.

The United Kingdom called for the convening of this meeting because of a hostile act committed on its territory that violates international norms and conventions related to chemical weapons. We underscore the right of the United Kingdom or any other country subjected to similar acts to undertake all the necessary investigations and carry out the appropriate measures in order to protect its national security and punish the perpetrators of such criminal act.

Lastly, we call on all States that bear a special responsibility in maintaining international peace and security, as well as all other States that express their commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, to undertake clear and sincere steps towards achieving the objective of creating a world free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, we recall resolution 2325 (2016), which reaffirms that the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery poses a danger to international peace and security.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Republic of Equatorial Guinea has learned of the attack involving the use a chemical nerve agent in Salisbury, United Kingdom, and we hope that events such as those will be duly investigated, that the results of those investigations will be made public, and that those responsible will face justice.

With regard to the accusations concerning the involvement of the Russian Federation in the incident reported by the Government of the United Kingdom, Equatorial Guinea hopes that both parties, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation, will be

able to address and resolve the situation in the most appropriate way possible through direct contact and by fully clarifying the facts. That is why we recommend that while the investigations are being carried out, both parties — the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom — demonstrate moderation. We invite both parties to work closely on the investigations being conducted to shed light on the situation. We thank the United Kingdom for its initiative to invite independent and volunteer investigators to carry out the analyses necessary to resolve this complex situation.

In conclusion, I would like to make it clear that the Republic of Equatorial Guinea is completely opposed to the production, stockpiling, distribution and use of chemical, biological, bacteriological and other similar products on human beings, which are at variance with the relevant international treaties. We therefore condemn such use regardless of its perpetrators. We wish Mr. Sergei Skripal, his daughter and others who were affected by the incident a speedy recovery.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his initiative to convene today's meeting.

Poland is gravely concerned about the use of a nerve agent in an attempt to murder Mr. Sergei Skripal and Ms. Yulia Skripal, which endangered the lives of innocent civilians. Poland has always been a committed supporter of curbing chemical weapons. In that regard, we condemn the unprecedented attack on the territory of the United Kingdom — the first of its kind in Europe since the Second World War. After the continued use of chemicals as weapons in Syria, this is another clear example of the violation of international law and the provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

We express our full solidarity with the British people and Government and our readiness to support our close ally and European partner in the conduct of the investigation. At the same time, we call on Russia to address the United Kingdom's questions and appropriately cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in that regard. Poland strongly believes that there is no place for impunity. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting. I also thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his statement.

In line with Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, we believe that it is important to update the Security Council on situations that could give rise to an international dispute. Peru believes that the use of chemical weapons is a threat to international peace and security, violates the non-proliferation regime and endangers the lives of civilians. Therefore, we express our deep concern about the use of a nerve agent in a public area, which put the lives of at least three people in the United Kingdom in serious danger. We deplore the fact that the incident occurred and express our solidarity with the victims. The incident should be investigated within the framework of the rule of law and due process, through the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and other competent entities. The parties concerned must fully cooperate to ensure a credible investigation that determines and punishes those responsible in line with relevant international law.

In conclusion, we stress that communication channels must remain open in order to resolve the situation.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for updating the Security Council on the use of nerve agents in Salisbury on 4 March.

Sweden condemns in the strongest terms the use of a nerve agent in an attempted murder on British soil. We stress the seriousness of that incident, which is unprecedented in Europe in recent years. Those responsible for the attack must be identified and held to account for their heinous actions. Given that a nerve agent developed as a chemical weapon has been used and the possibility that the attempted murder has links to State actors, Sweden supports the decision of the United Kingdom to bring the issue to the attention of the Security Council and other relevant bodies, such as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We stand by the United Kingdom and, like other European Union partners, express our strong solidarity with the Government of the United Kingdom and support its efforts in dealing with this grave security issue.

We note that, in her letter to the Secretary-General (S/2018/218, annex), the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom states that the class of chemical warfare agents used was originally developed by the Soviet Union and

inherited by the Russian Federation. Given that fact and taking into account the principal victim's background, we support the request of the United Kingdom that Russia provide an account of how the agent could have come to be used in Salisbury.

Let me also take this opportunity to stress the importance that Sweden attaches to the ban on chemical weapons. Such barbaric and illegal weapons kill indiscriminately and have no place in the world. We must ensure that the integrity of the Chemical Weapons Convention is fully respected.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire was saddened to learn about the use of a chemical nerve agent on British soil on 4 March in Salisbury. It expresses its sincere solidarity with the British Government and wishes those affected a speedy recovery. Côte d'Ivoire has always condemned the use of chemical weapons, regardless of the method employed. It also demands that light be shed on the incident in Salisbury.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan is known for its clear and consistent position as an uncompromising opponent of all types of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons. We condemn the use of weapons of mass destruction as immoral, inhuman and contrary to the principles of humanity. We express our deep concern about the tragic incident involving the possible use of chemical warfare agents on the territory of the United Kingdom. The use of chemical agents, regardless of location or target, is unacceptable.

At the same time, since this is a very politically sensitive issue, we must be extremely careful in drawing hasty conclusions without credible or convincing facts on the ground. The incident should be carefully investigated and all conclusions must be substantiated. We believe that an international response to the incident should be considered only after an exhaustive, transparent, objective and impartial investigation, undertaken in accordance with existing norms of international law, primarily on the basis of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We hope that both parties can resolve the contradictions and disputes between them by diplomatic means and normalize relations for the benefit of global stability and security.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We have taken note of the information we received today about the events that took place on 4 March. Bolivia would once again like to express its firm and absolute condemnation of the use of chemicals as weapons, which is an unjustifiable and criminal act, regardless of where, when or by whom it is committed. This is a serious violation of international law and international peace and security, and we hope that it will be investigated by the appropriate bodies methodically, technically, thoroughly, conclusively and without politicization.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We have been following the news about the nerve-agent attack in Salisbury, in the United Kingdom. We would like to express our sympathy for and solidarity with the families of the victims, as well as the Government and the people of the United Kingdom. We have taken note of the letter that was circulated yesterday (S/2018/218, annex) from the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom addressed to the Secretary-General on the incident, and we thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for its briefing today.

Our position on the use of chemical weapons is well known. We firmly condemn any use of chemical weapons by any State or non-State actor. The use of chemicals as weapons is unacceptable and constitutes a serious violation of international law. That said, we hope that the necessary independent investigation into the incident in Salisbury will be conducted and also vetted, including through consultation and the exchange of information on the basis of the relevant provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention, with a view to bringing those responsible to justice. We believe that cooperation in good faith between Russia and the United Kingdom will be critical to ensuring that this issue does not get out of hand and undermine relations between the two countries even further. In that regard, we hope and trust that given the very justifiable concern of the United Kingdom, all those concerned will cooperate fully so that the matter can be addressed fairly and in a way that will help to allay the concerns of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China has noted the recent poisoning incident in the United Kingdom.

We take note of the statements made by relevant countries on this incident. We hope that a comprehensive, objective and impartial investigation can be conducted, based on the facts and in accordance with the relevant international rules, and that it can reach

an evidence-based conclusion that can stand the test of facts and history. We hope that the relevant parties can handle the issue through the appropriate channels.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian):* Yesterday, after the letter from the British Prime Minister (S/2018/218, annex) was circulated to the Security Council, the United Kingdom asked that closed consultations be held. It was we who asked the President of the Security Council to change the meeting format from closed consultations to an open briefing. We did that for a reason, because we wanted everyone to see what is going on here. In the letter, which contains totally irresponsible assertions and which I actually find it difficult to comment on in diplomatic terms, there are threats to a sovereign State and permanent member of the Security Council that are contrary to international law and Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations. I would like to try to understand whether our British colleagues understand that, at least.

The first question we want to ask is why the representatives of the United Kingdom have dragged this issue into the Security Council, thereby ignoring the established procedure that London is obliged to follow, in accordance with its international commitments — that is, going through the specialized bodies, assuming we are talking about the use of toxic chemicals on United Kingdom territory. The response to that question is obvious to us. Our partners have dragged the issue into the forum of the Security Council because they know that the their arguments will not pass muster with the real experts on chemical weapons in The Hague. In reality, in other words, they are afraid of a genuine professional discussion of the subject, and this shows that the initiators of the meeting have entirely different motives for it.

The Russian Federation considers the unfounded accusations in British Prime Minister Theresa May's appeal of 13 March to the Secretary-General — to the effect that our country was allegedly involved in the use of poisonous substances in Salisbury — totally unacceptable. In what amounts to an ultimatum, it asks us to respond within 24 hours essentially to admit to committing a crime and to confess our guilt. We do not speak in the language of ultimatums with anyone. Nor do we let ourselves be spoken to in that kind of tone. But we are polite, and on 13 March we sent a note to the British Foreign Office affirming that Russia was not party to the incident and requesting samples of the substance involved and a joint investigation, particularly considering that one of the victims is a citizen of the Russian Federation. That was refused. In other words, while drumming up hysteria, London is acting in a wholly untransparent way. Today we heard reports of Russian diplomats being expelled and bilateral relations being frozen. Incidentally, I would like to ask my British colleague if that applies to the United Nations as well. There were also reports of a forthcoming cyberattack on Russia. Let this be a warning that this will not go unanswered.

We have been compelled to conclude that establishing the truth is the last thing the British authorities are interested in and that they have quite other motives. Their methods are those of the war by propaganda that have been refined in recent years, designed to produce a powerful information impact on an unenlightened and impressionable public. But there are no facts backing them up except their unfounded assertions about Russian tracks. Incidentally, this is far from being the first case of an attempt in the United Kingdom on the lives of Russian citizens or immigrants from Russia in extremely fishy circumstances, attempts that either still have not been investigated or about which we were refused any information. London should start by dealing with what is going on at home. Before blaming others, civilized people usually put their own house in order.

We suggested that the United Kingdom immediately launch the procedures provided for in paragraph 2 of article IX of the Chemical Weapons Convention, whereby a State party that receives a request from another State party for clarification shall provide the requesting State party with information as soon as possible, but in any case not later than 10 days after the request. Our British colleagues are aware of that, but have been in no hurry to invoke the Convention to which they are a party. We demand material proof of the alleged Russian tracks discovered in this high-profile affair. Without that, the allegedly irrefutable data carry no weight. So far we have seen nothing, except claims that this is "highly likely". In the circumstances, the right thing to do would be to ask the technical secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to carry out an independent laboratory analysis of the samples in the possession of the British authorities. I would now like to say a few words about chemistry.

There has been no scientific research and development conducted in the Russian Federation on what has been dubbed Novichok. Starting in the early 1970s, a large number of countries established programmes for creating new types of nerve and paralytic agents, known as VX, in particular in the United States and the Soviet Union. Russia terminated Soviet development efforts in the area of chemical weapons, in accordance with a decree issued by the President of the Russian Federation in 1992. In 2017, the Russian Federation completed the destruction of all of its existing stocks of chemical weapons, as verified by the OPCW, the relevant international entity. Incidentally, the United States has still not destroyed its chemical-weapon capacities.

In the mid-1990s, Western secret services brought a number of our specialists to the West, whose names are well known, as well as a certain amount of documentation. Research in this area has continued in both the United Kingdom and the United States. The positive achieved by these two countries in creating new toxic substances that for some reason are classified in the West under the general name Novichok are confirmed and reflected in more than 200 NATO-country open sources. We have the references for them and are ready to provide them to the Council. The actual identification of the toxic substance alleged to have been used in the incident was done at Porton Down, the British Ministry of Defence's research facility where the development and production of chemical weapons, including of this kind, is conducted. The most likely sources of this particular chemical are the countries that have been doing intensive research on such substances since the end of the 1990s, which include Great Britain.

We are not chemists here, so let me cite the opinion of a professional one. For the British specialists to state with complete confidence that this gas is Novichok and not something else, it would be essential for them to have a so-called control standard. In order to prove that it is the exact same compound, it has to be compared to that standard. Of necessity, if they state that this is a Novichok gas, they must have a standard for that substance. That means they have both a sample and a formula, and that is the most important piece of this whole story. In other words, if Great Britain is so dead certain that this is a Novichok gas, it has the formula and samples, and is itself capable of manufacturing it.

We are living in unusual times, and shocking things are happening before our very eyes. The presumption of innocence is in the process of being replaced by the presumption of guilt, and that principle of criminal law is now being transferred to international relations. Today Ambassador Haley, as if she were an experienced chemist and expert in that area, opined about Russia's crimes. We have long been familiar with the fact that she needs no investigations to identify the guilty parties. In her letter the British Prime Minister of the United Kingdom says that her scenario is "highly likely", but Mrs. Haley surpasses her trusty ally even in this.

If for the Soviet prosecutor Andrey Vyshinsky, confession was the queen of evidence, then today, in our Foreign Minister Lavrov's apposite words, it is suspicion that now plays that role. There is no longer any need even to show the Council test tubes containing an unknown white substance; it is sufficient to write a letter making egregious accusations about a sovereign State. We have already seen that with respect to Syria, and now they are trying to add Russia to the list of violators of the Convention. I would like to remind the Council about the United Kingdom's record of service in participating in illegal attacks on independent States, including on a basis of fake evidence. That led to immeasurable suffering among civilians in Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya. Has the Council forgotten that Great Britain is notorious for being a State that has embraced the practice of targeted drone assassinations? In the context, hearing it heap invective on us is strange, and particularly so when it is based on no evidence.

There is a well-known principle in jurisprudence — and in life in general — "cui bono, or cui prodest", meaning, who benefits? What do members think? Does this incident benefit Russia on the eve of its presidential elections and the World Cup football championship? I can think of several countries right away — although, in accordance with the principle of the presumption of innocence, I will not name them — for which this incident, and blaming Russia for it, would be extraordinarily beneficial and timely. What motive could the British Prime Minister possibly ascribe to Russia for liquidating Sergei Skripal, who, after his prosecution, sentencing, prison term, pardon and handover to the British authorities, no longer posed any kind of threat to my country? But he is perfect for the role of victim, who can be used to justify all sorts of unthinkable lies, smears and derogatory public relations aimed at blackening Russia's reputation. We have been repeatedly warning that some kind of provocation along these lines could happen on the eve

of major events. Today we are witnesses to the fact that the Government of the United Kingdom will stop at nothing to deliberately tarnish Russia.

In his stories about Sherlock Holmes, the classic British writer Arthur Conan Doyle, famed in his own country and very popular in Russia, features a somewhat incompetent and comic character, Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard. He is not terribly intelligent and deduction is not his forte. His role is to serve as a foil for Sherlock Holmes's extraordinary detective powers. He instantly seizes on the superficial clues to a crime and rushes to draw obvious conclusions so that he can then be refuted by Holmes, who always discovers the real motive and clues behind the crime. God forbid I should suspect the current incumbents of Scotland Yard of unprofessionalism, although I do think that it would not hurt to have a Sherlock Holmes around today. Today, however, the people playing the role of the collective Inspector Lestrade are high-level members of the British Government, spouting irresponsible, unfounded, superficial, monstrous accusations that have far-reaching consequences. Russia calls on Britain's Government officials to renounce these practices of their nineteenth-century imperial past — the language of ultimatums, unproven accusations and threats — give up their neocolonialist ways and to return to life under the law. In situations such as those described in Theresa May's claims, the standard thing to do is to turn to instruments of legal assistance. To sum up, we would once again like to state the following.

Russia had nothing to do with this incident. We consider London's ultimatums null and void. We expect the United Kingdom to act in strict compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and other relevant international instruments, including the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, as well as to provide samples of the substance that the British investigation refers to for joint investigation, since it says that it is of Russian origin. That is a mandatory requirement under the Convention, not an optional one. We are ready for an investigation. We have nothing to fear and nothing to hide. We have already spoken about the procedure in paragraph 2 of article IX of the Chemical Weapons Convention. If the clarifications provided are considered inadequate, we can turn to the OPCW's governing bodies. That is the only civilized way to settle the issue. As long as we are being accused of violating the Convention with absolutely no proof, there is no other way to proceed. Until we can have a productive dialogue with specialists in this area we will not get anywhere. We are ready to cooperate openly and constructively within the framework of the OPCW.

In conclusion, we would like to circulate a draft press statement that sums up my statement and emphasizes the importance of activating the procedure in article IX of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We hope that all Council members will support it.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands supports the remarks made by the representative of the United Kingdom, who brought to our attention the urgent matter before us today. I would like to underline three points. They are about, first, our solidarity with the United Kingdom; secondly, the use of a chemical weapon; and thirdly, the importance of accountability.

Until the beginning of this month, it would have been hard to imagine a more peaceful place in the world than Salisbury, a quiet, historic town among the rolling hills of southern England. But its peace has been brutally disturbed. A man and his daughter were poisoned with a nerve agent. The United Kingdom was shocked. The world was shocked. The Kingdom of the Netherlands was shocked. On behalf of my Government, Stef Blok, our Minister for Foreign Affairs, has strongly condemned the attack and expressed our solidarity with the United Kingdom. People in the Netherlands feel for Yulia and Sergei Skripal and hope for the recovery of all the victims. We fully understand the outrage of the United Kingdom authorities. We also understand why this new incident is particularly painful for the people of the United Kingdom, who still have vivid memories of the brutal murder, using radioactive polonium, of Alexander Litvinenko in the heart of London. Now the United Kingdom finds itself dealing with a new and different case, of which the full details are yet to be determined. But one thing is already beyond doubt. No State can or should accept attacks that take place on its sovereign territory. The United Kingdom can count on the full solidarity of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in this.

My second point is about the use of a chemical weapon. We are gravely concerned about the type of weapon that was used in this attack, a military-grade

nerve agent and a substance that no regular criminals could easily get their hands on. This is the first time since the end of the Second World War that a nerve agent has been used in Europe. The recklessness of the act is beyond words. This nerve agent was used in a public space with many unsuspecting civilians around. It could have had even more horrible effects. I would also like to reiterate that any use of chemical weapons is abhorrent. The Kingdom of the Netherlands regards this a threat to international peace and security. It should therefore be a matter of concern for the Council, and we commend the United Kingdom for bringing it to our attention. After the recent chemical-weapon attacks in Syria, the attack in the United Kingdom is another warning to the world that we must step up our vigilance if we are to prevent the use of such weapons of mass destruction. We underline the important role of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague in that regard.

That brings me to my third and final point, which is accountability. There must be no impunity for this crime. My Government has stated that the Kingdom of the Netherlands fully supports the United Kingdom in its quest for the truth, and we call on all other countries to do so as well. The United Kingdom authorities had urged the Russian Federation to provide answers to their questions by yesterday. After Russia's failure to do so, we can understand why Prime Minister May announced bilateral measures earlier today. We see no reason for Russia to continue to refuse the United Kingdom's request. Nor do we see any legitimate reason why anyone should try to delay, sidetrack, second-guess or discredit the investigation carried out by the United Kingdom authorities. The international community cannot shrug its shoulders over this crime as if nothing had happened. The United Nations, the Council and all Member States should cooperate with the United Kingdom as it continues to investigate this gruesome act. The perpetrators should be brought to justice.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the United Kingdom has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): My Russian colleague has asked some questions that I thought I should answer.

He asked why we came to the Security Council. Is the Security Council not where a country comes when there has been a threat to international peace and security or an unlawful attack on it?

He asked if we will work with Russia here. Of course we will. We believe in the United Nations and its Security Council. We believe in the international rules-based system. We want the Council to work together to uphold international peace and security and to resolve conflict together. Of course we will work with Russia to achieve those aims here in the Council.

I set out in detail how the Chemical Weapons Convention works and its article IX in particular. The Council members have heard from me and from our Russian colleague, so I will not go into it in great detail again. I will simply say that under article IX, we have asked Russia for an explanation. Russia's response was to say that it considered our request to be null and void. We have also asked the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to support us with an independent verification of our analysis. Our Russian colleague talked about samples, but once again, that is a misunderstanding of the Convention. There are no provisions in the Convention that require the United Kingdom to share samples collected as part of a criminal investigation. The Chemical Weapons Convention does provide inspected State parties with a right to have duplicate copies of samples taken for the purposes of an inspection, but Russia is not an inspected State party in this case.

We are asked why we were so keen to request a quick answer. That comes from our past experience. One of the key tactics in the Russian playbook is to delay, delay, delay — distract and mire in procedural delay. We know that, of course, from the tragic Litvinenko case in 2006. We waited for months in the hope that Russia would cooperate with our requests to extradite and investigate the known suspects. We waited in vain, and we will not make the same mistake again.

Finally, my Russian colleague quotes fiction. Let me quote the Russian President when we think about who benefits. In 2010, he said,

> "Traitors will kick the bucket, believe me. Those other folks betrayed their friends, their brothers-in-arms. Whatever they got in exchange for it, those 30 pieces of silver they were given, they will choke on them."

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I am not planning to engage in a detailed discussion with my British colleague. I have already said everything I wanted to say in my statement.

I just want to emphasize one thing, which is that we have not received a formal request, in line with the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which we were and remain ready to respond. We were given a 24-hour ultimatum. Once again, let me stress that we have no intention of responding in a tone or form like those of the unsubstantiated accusations made against us before we had the opportunity to respond. But we are ready to cooperate with the British Government in investigating this sad incident. In my opinion, nothing that I said earlier contradicts that.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.