

Comment by the Information and Press Department on the initiative to convene a Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)

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I. Poluektov Hits: 446

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On May 29, Britain officially addressed the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) with a request to convene a Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The initiative was supported by Australia, Bulgaria, Germany, Canada, France, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, the United States and Japan. Britain suggested the only item for the agenda but it sounds intriguing – Support for the Global Ban on the Use of Chemical Weapons.

The Russian Federation has repeatedly said that it is unacceptable to use chemical weapons anywhere under any circumstances. At the same time we believe that the OPCW plan for regular activities in 2018 fully meets the requirements of the organisation in discussing compliance with the CWC by its signatories. Regular sessions of its Executive Council will be held in July and October while the Fourth Review Conference of the CWC will take place in November.

There is every reason to believe that this initiative by London and its supporters is aimed at further politicising the OPCW, which was, until recently, one of the most effective international agencies on disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Incidentally, the initiators of this special session are doing little to conceal the fact that they plan to use it or fanning anti-Syria and anti-Russia hysteria over the fabricated episodes of the alleged use of toxic chemicals by Syrian government forces, which were staged by NGOs like the White Helmets that are affiliated with militants, and the London-inspired Skripal case.

This attitude towards the CWC is all the more defiant because the fact-finding investigations into the incidents in Syrian Douma and British Salisbury have not yet been completed.

Let us recall that the hypocrisy and lack of integrity of the opponents of the Bashar al-Assad government and the inconsistency of their groundless accusations on the use of chemical weapons by Syrian armed forces against civilians were exposed at a briefing of witnesses and unwitting participants in the videos staged by the White Helmets, at the OPCW Headquarters on April 26.

As for London's no-holds-barred anti-Russia campaign on the Skripal case, we would like to note the growing understanding by the foreign public and political communities of the real reasons behind London's insinuations on the Salisbury incident. The Western media write increasingly about numerous inconsistencies in the British version of the incident and publish opinions by reputable experts that are completely opposite to it.

We noted, in part, the interview by a leading expert on chemical disarmament Ladislav Streda with the newspaper Pravo (Right of Law) on May 26. He again exposed London's conspiracy theory according to which toxic chemicals called "Novichok," under Western classification, could only be produced in the USSR and Russia. According to Streda, the technology for synthesising this chemical is known to at least Canada, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Sweden and of course Britain. Moreover, after analyzing the information on the Salisbury incident, the Czech expert concluded that most likely Sergey and Yulia Skripal were exposed not to Novichok but a fairly harmless and accessible fentanyl, which allowed them to survive.

Thus, it is becoming increasingly obvious with the passage of time that Britain is deliberately distorting the gist of the Salisbury incident and trying to use the OPCW in its geopolitical interests by deepening the split in its ranks.

We believe the plans of the initiators of the special session to assign to the OPCW Technical Secretariat far-fetched attributive functions on detecting those guilty of the use of toxic chemicals are absolutely unacceptable. They are at variance with the provisions of the CWC. Thus, those behind this idea are deliberately trying to damage the CWC, which threatens to ruin this international treaty and the OPCW.

We urge the states parties to the CWC not to follow in the wake of London and its associates and to prevent the destruction of the global system of chemical disarmament and non-proliferation, which took decades to establish.