

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1181st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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On the “Skripal case”

Mr. Chairperson,

In connection with the hasty inclusion by the representatives of the United Kingdom of the Salisbury incident under “Any other business”, we should like to say the following.

This matter involving the use of a nerve agent in the environs of London is a very specific issue that requires a professional discussion. No one has authorized the OSCE to examine such matters. The participating States do, of course, have the right to raise whatever issues they see fit at the Permanent Council, but whether this will help to establish the truth is another matter altogether. However, if the UK Permanent Representative wishes to discuss this, we are ready to do so.

Let us start by recalling that Russia’s position of principle was stated in the note that we circulated at the OSCE on 23 March of this year. The participating States can take another look at this document: there is an English version too.

We have a great many questions regarding what happened in Salisbury. Following today’s statements, we have even more questions for the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Kingdom, which not only refuses bilateral co-operation on an investigation into the circumstances of the Salisbury incident (in which Russian citizens were the victims), but is also ignoring the established international legal formats and instruments, including the provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (CWC).

As we know, the United Kingdom went directly with its version of events to the OPCW. It is therefore bound to act in accordance with Article IX, paragraph 2, of the CWC: “States Parties should, whenever possible, first make every effort to clarify and resolve, through exchange of information and consultations among themselves, any matter which may cause doubt about compliance with this Convention, or which gives rise to concerns about a related matter which may be considered ambiguous.” In other words, the United Kingdom

should first have made an official request to Russia seeking clarifications on the matters of concern. Such clarifications are provided during the course of bilateral consultations to the requesting State Party as soon as possible, but in any case not later than ten days after receiving the request.

If the requesting State deems the clarifications to be inadequate, it has the right to turn to the OPCW's decision-making bodies – the Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties – for assistance.

In this context, the ultimatum given by Prime Minister Theresa May calling on Russia to provide the requested information within 24 hours was a completely improper and provocative act. What are needed are fully fledged consultations, in accordance with the CWC's provisions. In this situation, the United Kingdom, which levelled accusations against us at the OPCW, must act in accordance with the procedures set out by the CWC in such cases.

There are many other murky circumstances related to this incident. Where were the Skripals for four hours with their phones switched off? How were the samples taken? Who will confirm their reliability? Why were blood samples taken without first asking relatives' permission? Where was an antidote found so quickly to an unknown chemical substance? Were the Skripals given an antidote? What were Sergei Skripal's activities? Who were his contacts? Where did he go? With whom did he have contact? Did the Skripals meet with anyone that day or the day before? Where is the footage from video surveillance cameras? How do the hastily made accusations tally with Scotland Yard's statements that it will take the investigators weeks and even months to do their work? Why have we not been granted consular access to our citizens, who were the victims of a possible terrorist attack on British soil? Why is Scotland Yard speaking on behalf of Yulia Skripal? Why, after her second conversation yesterday with her cousin, is she being physically prevented from using the phone or speaking to journalists? There are a great many elements here that do not tally with the statements of the UK Foreign Office, which has already deleted its hasty tweet about Russia's "guilt". This all smells like one great lie.

Now, concerning "novichok", Russia never carried out any research and development work with the designation "novichok". In the mid-1990s, Western intelligence services took to the West a number of specialists (including former specialists at GosNIIOKhT (State Scientific Research Institute of Organic Chemistry and Technology) Vil Mirzayanov, S. Dubov, G. Kazhdan and others), as well as some documentation, and continued research in this area in the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Sweden and the United States of America. These countries' positive results in creating new toxic substances, which in the West, for some reason, are classified under the general name of "novichok", have been confirmed and reflected in more than 200 open sources in NATO countries. So, you are looking in the wrong place, ladies and gentlemen.

The OPCW will hold a special session on 18 April, at which the Salisbury incident and the OPCW Technical Secretariat's report will be discussed at the expert level. What I can say now is that the UK Permanent Representative is blatantly distorting information from the press release and the published summary of the OPCW Technical Secretariat report. Let us examine these documents together. Yes, they state that a nerve agent of a high degree of purity was used in Salisbury, and that is all. There is no mention of the "novichok" designation that our UK and US colleagues are so fond of, and not a word about Russia. On

the basis of these conclusions the UK Government has already rushed to declare that this confirms “Russia’s guilt”. But this is obvious forgery! These are very dubious actions.

We are surprised to see some OSCE participating States blindly go along with the United Kingdom without even taking the time to give the document a thorough read. Some of the statements often contradict their own governments’ positions. For example, the Prime Minister of Lithuania just yesterday expressed doubt that the British statements constitute an evidential base. Proof is needed and we are ready for this investigation. But the UK Government takes the line that “we will make do without Russia.”

And yet we are talking here about a Russian Federation citizen who is being isolated from any contact with us, which also goes against not only bilateral agreements between Russia and the United Kingdom (I can give the relevant quotes from these documents) but also all normal forms of contact. And so I will not repeat here the words of the head of the Porton Down laboratory, or the distinguished head of the Foreign Office, who, in an interview with Deutsche Welle, for example, said one thing, but the next day said quite another.

If we are to get to the bottom of this incident, this is a job for the professional community, and it is for this purpose that we have the OPCW and the CWC, in accordance with which the United Kingdom should have made contact with the Russian Federation, considering the accusations made. Once again, I say that the biggest problem is the failure to act in accordance with the CWC’s provisions and instead making groundless and baseless accusations regarding the use of a substance that was never produced in the Russian Federation or in the Soviet Union. And this is taking place even though the OPCW officially confirmed in September last year that Russia had destroyed all of its chemical weapons stockpiles.

I would like to see a professional and sober approach prevail here in this room. These groundless accusations are contrary to the purpose of our Organization, which is called the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Co-operation in the interests of security. Let us take a more responsible approach to our duties as permanent representatives.

Thank you for your attention.