

**Opening Statement of Nicole Shampaine
Nominee for U.S. Representative to the
Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, with the rank of Ambassador
Senator Foreign Relations Committee
November 16, 2023**

Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Hagerty, and distinguished Members of the Committee: it is an honor to come before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the next U.S. Permanent Representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). I am grateful for the confidence the President and Secretary Blinken have placed in me. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with this Committee and Members of Congress to advance U.S. interests at the OPCW.

Joining me here are my husband Martin, my mother Françoise, and my nephew William. My mother and my father, Marshall, who is looking down on us from above, instilled in me and in my brother Alain the importance of using one's life to make the world a better place. They showed us, through their example, the difference each of us can make in service to others, whether in our community or more broadly. And it is this commitment to service, in my case service to our country, that inspires me daily. I am also profoundly grateful to my husband Martin who is my constant source of love, support, and strength.

It has been a privilege to serve the American people as a Foreign Service Officer. Throughout my career, I have sought to protect and advance the interests of the United States, whether at the U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Vienna, working on counterterrorism at the National Security Council, or in other assignments both domestic and overseas. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing my service as U.S. Permanent Representative to the OPCW.

The mission of the OPCW is to end the development, production, stockpiling, transfer, and use of chemical weapons. This is essential to the security of the American people. Back in 1995, then-Senator Biden stated, "The single greatest threat facing the United States today is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We need to use every means at our disposal to reduce the chances of a chemical attack in our country. The Chemical Weapons Convention is an irreplaceable tool to achieve that goal." His statement was true in 1995 and remains so today.

When the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force in 1997, the main function of the OPCW was to verify the destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles and confirm the chemical industry was not involved in the proliferation of chemical weapons or their precursors. When the United States concluded the destruction of all U.S. chemical weapons stockpiles this year, the international community celebrated the completion of the destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles worldwide.

Frustratingly, however, now in the 21st Century, the international norm against using chemical weapons is being challenged. The Assad regime has used chemical weapons repeatedly against the Syrian people since it acceded to the Convention in 2013. And Russia used Novichok nerve agents in assassination attempts at least twice in recent years.

In this environment, the work of the OPCW is more essential than ever. Thanks to the OPCW's dedicated staff, the Assad regime's repeated use of chemical weapons has been independently confirmed by the international community. Additionally, in light of Russia's past behavior, the United States has serious concerns that Russia may use chemical agents in Ukraine. That's why the United States, along with our Allies and partners, is working with Ukraine at the OPCW to ensure the OPCW is prepared to render assistance, if Ukraine so asks.

If confirmed, I will actively seek to advance U.S. interests at the OPCW. This includes continuing to support international efforts to hold both Syria and Russia to account for their use of chemical weapons. And I would work to counter Russia's ongoing chemical weapons-related disinformation campaigns that distract from its invasion of Ukraine, seek to discredit the OPCW's impartial and objective work, and attempt to shield the Assad regime from accountability for its chemical weapons use.

The Chemical Weapons Convention remains an irreplaceable tool that aids in our efforts to eliminate chemical weapons use. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the OPCW remains an effective force for addressing the ongoing threat posed by the use of chemical weapons.

Thank you and I look forward to answering your questions.