

**Statement of Joseph Manso**  
**Ambassadorial Nominee to the OPCW**  
**Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**June 4, 2020**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Merkley, and distinguished Members of the Committee: it is an honor to come before this committee as President Trump's nominee to be the next U.S. Permanent Representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). I am grateful for and humbled by the confidence the President and Secretary Pompeo have placed in me. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with this Committee and Members of Congress to advance U.S. interests in the OPCW. If confirmed, this OPCW assignment would be a logical follow-on to my years in the Foreign Service, and I would not be here without the love and support of my wife, Patricia, and my daughters Lauren and Marisa. They have shared my Foreign Service journey, moving 16 times in the past 34 years, usually without complaint. I would also not be here without the love and support of my parents, Jose and Mary Manso. I thank them and all my family.

We are all patriots here, and none of us requires further proof of the goodness of the United States, but the fact that this country has offered so much to the son of an immigrant from Spain underlines how America remains a land of opportunity. It is for me a privilege to serve the American people as a Foreign Service Officer, and I have sought throughout my career to protect and advance the interests of the United States, whether at NATO, the United Nations, the OSCE, or my bi-lateral postings.

The mission of the OPCW, to end the development, production, stockpiling, transfer, and use of chemical weapons, is essential to the security of the American people. This mission has had strong and continuous bipartisan support since the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) entered into force in 1997.

In April 2017, President Trump stated, "It is in the vital national security interests of the United States to prevent and deter the spread and use of deadly chemical weapons." The United States has made it a priority to restore deterrence against the use of chemical weapons and has made clear its national security importance.

In the past two years, the United States and its partners led efforts at the OPCW to stop further chemical weapons use. In June 2018, the OPCW Conference of the States Parties adopted an unprecedented decision condemning recent uses of chemical weapons in the UK, Malaysia, Iraq, and in Syria by the Assad regime. The 2018 decision directed the OPCW to establish arrangements to identify perpetrators for use or likely use of chemical weapons in Syria, which the OPCW accomplished through the creation of the Investigation and Identification Team (the "IIT"). The IIT released its first report in April and attributed to the Assad regime responsibility for three chemical weapons attacks in March 2017. In response to the report, the United States is urging responsible states to work together to push for accountability for the Assad regime's confirmed use of chemical weapons and to prevent further use, looking

at the full array of tools available at the OPCW, the UN, and belonging to sovereign states. CW use will not be tolerated.

Another example of U.S. leadership in addressing chemical weapons use was in response to the Salisbury and Amesbury incidents involving the military-grade nerve agent referred to as Novichoks. The United States, Canada, and the Netherlands jointly submitted a proposal to add two chemical families of Novichoks to Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention, which was adopted by consensus at last year's Conference of the States Parties. The addition of these lethal nerve agents developed by the former Soviet Union will subject them to the routine verification requirements under the Convention. This change, which goes into effect next week, represents the first-ever addition to the CWC Annex on Chemicals in the Convention's history and reflects the Convention's adaptability to current threats.

If confirmed, I would be honored to take forward this work, which has been accomplished thus far through tireless U.S. leadership. If the United States is to succeed in restoring deterrence against chemical weapons use and driving chemical weapons use to zero, we must continue to support these efforts, and we must encourage and support proactive initiatives against chemical weapons development, production, stockpile, and use.

If confirmed by the Senate, I will work to ensure that the OPCW remains a viable and effective force for promoting a world free from chemical weapons by addressing possible future chemical weapons threats. In October 2019, the United States, Australia, Switzerland and 21 additional co-sponsors launched an initiative to adopt a set of decisions making clear States Parties' understanding that under the CWC the aerosolized use of central nervous system (CNS)-acting chemicals for law enforcement is impermissible. The United States is working to create a broad coalition of states committed to ensuring there is no use of CNS-acting chemicals as chemical weapons.

This Administration has emphasized it is crucial to call out non-compliance with the Convention to make clear such behavior is not acceptable, and to prevent further malign behavior. I fully support this Administration priority. The United States announced its assessment of Iran's non-compliance with the Convention in its national statement to the Fourth CWC Review Conference in November 2018. The United States highlighted its assessment that the Russian Federation violated the Convention when it used a Novichok in an assassination attempt in the United Kingdom. Sadly, the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons repeatedly against the Syrian people as a means to gain a military advantage and to terrorize people into submission. And in November 2019 in its national statement at the OPCW Conference of the States Parties, the United States also raised to States Parties' attention Burma's non-compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. This demonstrates the United States' concerted effort to address CWC non-compliance and not to allow these violations to go unchallenged. I am fully committed to making it clear that States Parties must comply with their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. In the case of Burma, we are working with that Government to help them come into compliance with their obligations, having

engaged with them repeatedly on these issues, including by declaring and destroying a historic chemical weapons production facility, most recently with a bilateral consultation in late February in the Burmese capital, Nay Pyi Taw.

In conclusion, I am proud of what the United States, States Parties and the OPCW together have accomplished thus far. If confirmed, I will be honored to be part of the Administration's team committed to effective multilateralism and advancing our national security objective of seeking a world free of chemical weapons and driving chemical weapons use to zero.

Thank you.