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SWITZERLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR HEINZ WALKER-NEDERKOORN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION TO THE
OPCW AT THE NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

The international prohibition of chemical weapons has been challenged in recent years by their repeated use. Switzerland condemns in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances. Such acts constitute a serious violation of international law, and those responsible must be brought to justice.

The first report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) convincingly concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the town of Ltamenah, Syria, in March 2017 were individuals belonging to the Syrian Arab Air Force. We must condemn these flagrant and repeated violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) by the Syrian Arab Republic and take action. My Government therefore welcomed the steps that have been taken by the Executive Council (“the Council”) in response to the IIT’s findings. However, as the Director-General reported, the Syrian Arab Republic has not met the demands of the Council as stipulated in decision EC-94/DEC.2. This is unacceptable and Switzerland therefore fully supports and co-sponsors the draft decision of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties on “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (C-25/DEC/CRP.10). We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to comply fully with its obligations under the Convention.

Likewise, the use of a nerve agent of the novichok group in the attack against Alexei Navalny, as confirmed by the OPCW, continues to be of grave concern. Switzerland once again calls on the Russian Federation to immediately launch a criminal investigation to hold those responsible to account, and to fully cooperate with the OPCW. The absence of a transparent and impartial investigation, in addition to the lack of cooperation with the international community, only further erodes credibility.

Switzerland is convinced that it is necessary to affirm States Parties’ understanding that the aerosolised use of chemicals acting on the central nervous system (CNS) is inconsistent with law enforcement as a “purpose not prohibited” under the Convention, in order to safeguard the Convention’s integrity and prevent the weakening of the global norm against chemical weapons. We call on all States Parties to support us in our endeavour and to join the group of co-sponsors working to eliminate the various risks posed by the aerosolised use of CNS-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes.



To conclude, Mr Chairperson, let me express my country's full support for Germany's initiative regarding a Council decision to allow for the convening of meetings in emergency circumstances. Ensuring that the policy-making organs remain fully functional despite the uncertainty related to the evolution of the epidemiological situation is paramount. We sincerely hope that a decision on this matter can be taken in the near future.

Thank you.

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