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**ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN**

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN  
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION  
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,  
Director-General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway as the Chairperson of the Twenty -Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties on your well-deserved election. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support.

My delegation would also like to associate itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the OPCW H.E. Fikrat Akhundov on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China.

The Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its commitment to a world free of chemical weapons; condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, and under any circumstances and supports the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention").

The Convention is a unique, modelling, and non-discriminatory multilateral instrument with a verification mechanism in the field of disarmament that bans an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. Despite international ups and downs, the Convention since its entry-into-force has attained remarkable achievements. Universal adherence and the sizeable population covered by the Convention, the total amount of weapons eliminated, the number of inspections carried out at chemical weapons facilities as well as the chemical industry, the award of the 2013 Nobel Prize for Peace to the OPCW, are indications of the success of the Convention and its executive organ i.e., the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Thus, the Convention became exemplary for other mechanisms of disarmament.

Against this background, it is a matter of serious concern that certain negative developments in recent years undermined efforts towards the strengthening the Convention in its entirety. A certain group of States Parties in pursuit of their short-sighted political interests have converted the OPCW from a technical Organisation to a politicised and confrontational one. Needless to say, such an approach, if continued, would have far-reaching negative implications on the objectives enshrined in the Convention.



The complete destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles would remain the prime objective of the Convention. Consequently, it is imperative that the sole possessor State takes all necessary measures to expedite the completion of the destruction of the remaining chemical stockpiles at the earliest possible date as required under the Convention. In this regard, my delegation requests the OPCW policy-making organs, as well as the Technical Secretariat, continue to closely monitor the destruction process and make the necessary recommendations to ensure that the elimination process is completed at the earliest and due time.

Regrettably, since the establishment of the voluntary fund for chemical weapons victims, no concrete measure has been taken to meet the needs of the chemical weapons victims. Sustained reserve and lack of political will by developed countries that are in a position to contribute to the fund, has undermined the effectiveness of the International Support Network for Chemical Weapons Victims and the Fund established in this regard. Hence, it is highly expected that the needs of the chemical weapons victims shall be met along with intensified efforts for fundraising as well as the consideration of the allocation of a budget from the regular budget of the OPCW.

It should also be noted that unfortunately in total disregard of the basic principles of the international law the unilateral coercive measures taken by the United States of America against the Islamic Republic of Iran, which made it difficult for Iranian chemical weapons victims, as one of the most vulnerable groups of the COVID-19 pandemic, to have access to necessary medicines and equipment. Furthermore, failure and inaction by the OPCW to help these victims to have full access to their basic needs gives a wrong signal to the international community that this Organisation is not decisive in its efforts towards alleviating the suffering of chemical weapons victims. The international community is waiting for a long overdue promise for an action to secure the life of the victims, so that the days of victims aren't numbered. The Islamic Republic of Iran, as the biggest victim of chemical weapons in contemporary history, attaches a paramount importance to Article X and its humanitarian objectives. During Saddam Hussein's eight-year imposed war against the Islamic Republic of Iran, chemical weapons were repeatedly used against the military and civilians. As a result, tens of thousands were martyred or injured. In the face of such a challenge, the Islamic Republic of Iran has gained unique experience and capabilities in the field of the medical aspects of assistance and protection against chemical weapons, and accordingly have become the first State Party to conclude an agreement with the Organisation that extends its readiness to assist in the case of use of chemical weapons.

Article X on assistance and protection against chemical weapons use, in line with the principles of international law, international humanitarian law and United Nations Charter, is the main embodiment of the humanitarian objectives the Convention envisaged. We are of the view that the measures taken to implement the Article X, including the establishment of the International Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons, the voluntary fund, and the OPCW's Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM), as well as workshops and training courses, are not adequate to contribute to the full and effective implementation of the provisions of Article X. In this regard, certain points need to be emphasised:

- Since the voluntary nature of the fund prevents it from achieving its goals, it is expected that, in line with paragraph 11 of Article X, direct budgeting from the OPCW regular programme and budget to be considered.

- The capacity of developing States Parties need to be strengthened. This aim would not be achieved until certain unequivocal commitments by developed States Parties through a meaningful international cooperation in transfer of technology, capacity building programmes and exchange of equipment and materials.
- Maintaining and strengthening the Organisation's preparedness to provide assistance and protection in the event of the use of chemical weapons.
- All States Parties are encouraged, to conclude agreements with the Organisation regarding the procurement of assistance.

The full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI is an essential element in the realisation of the object and purposes of the Convention. In accordance with paragraph 1 of Article XI the provisions of this Article of the Convention shall be implemented in a manner which avoids hampering the economic or technological development of States Parties and international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under the Convention including the international exchange of scientific and technical information, chemicals and equipment for the production, processing or use of chemicals for purposes not prohibited under the Convention. As stipulated under the provisions of Article XI "the States Parties shall not maintain among themselves any restrictions, including those in any international agreements, incompatible with the obligations undertaken under this Convention, which restrict or impede trade and development and promotion of scientific and technological knowledge in the field of chemistry for peaceful purpose".

The worrying fact is that the objectives of Article XI have not yet been fully and effectively achieved. Additionally, arbitrary export control mechanisms, namely the Australia Group, along with illegal and unjustified unilateral coercive measures are clearly inconsistent with the objectives of the Convention.

Nearly twenty-five years after the entry-into-force of the Convention, Article XI as a fundamental pillar of the Convention still lacks an action plan, as has been the case for Article VII and the universality of the Convention, on its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. The Convention is agreed upon by the States Parties and all its provisions and annexes are of equal value. The persistent approach towards 'hierarchy setting' on the implementation of the provisions of the Convention would jeopardise its integrity and credibility. Furthermore, it should be emphasised that the implementation of Article VII is contingent upon the realisation of Articles X and XI. We emphasise that the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Convention and China, and other States Parties have made a comprehensive proposal on the full and effective implementation of Article XI which needs to be thoroughly discussed and agreed upon.

My delegation takes note of the discussion paper issued by the Technical Secretariat on the options and ideas for capacity-building opportunities at the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre). We are of the view that the activities and programmes of the ChemTech Centre shall be developed in a way to enable the OPCW to contribute to the materialisation of the Articles X and XI.

The provisions of the Convention strike a delicate balance between the rights and obligations of the States Parties under the Convention. The Convention provisions on "purposes not prohibited under the Convention" as explicitly stipulated in paragraph 9 of Article II is the embodiment of the rights of States Parties. The decision of the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council on the central nervous system-acting chemicals (CNS-acting chemicals)

was in clear contradiction with this delicate balance. It is a great regret that the decision entitled “Understanding Regarding the Aerosolised Use of Central Nervous System-acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes” was adopted by vote while it claims that a common understanding has been achieved on CNS-acting Chemicals. It is highly expected that the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties would explore ways and means that States Parties are not divided on the scope of the Convention and remain united on strengthening it in its entirety.

It is also expected that the Scientific Advisory Board address issues within the framework of the Convention and avoid entering into the topics that fall outside the remit of the Convention. The Organisation’s financial and human resources should not be allocated to activities that are not within the ambit of the Convention.

The non-consensual decision of the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties on 27 June 2018, with only 82 votes, has divided States Parties and undermines the valuable tradition of consensus. While the decision did not meet the substantive amendment requirements of the Article XV of the Convention, it encroaches on the responsibility of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security. The attribution mandate and the establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) are in flagrant contravention of the letter and spirit of the Convention on the scope of the OPCW’s authority. The implications of this decision have overshadowed the performance of the Organisation. Deep disagreement over the costs associated with the budget of the IIT, is a clear example of negative consequences of the said decision.

The Syrian Government was in a fragile security situation in 2013, when acceded to the Convention, in a courageous act, regardless of proximity to the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) arsenals of the Zionist regime. Under the supervision of the OPCW’s inspection teams, the Syrian Arab Republic completed the destruction of its chemical weapons. Then, the Syrian Government made remarkable cooperation with the OPCW’s inspection teams, particularly the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). Submission of 96 monthly reports on the activities related to the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons as well as holding 24 rounds of consultation between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority are indications of the Syrian Arab Republic’s commitment to the Convention. However, against this bedrock and due to the short-sighted geopolitical ambitions of some States Parties, the path of cooperation between the Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic faced increased external political pressures. The footprint of those pressures can clearly be seen in the recent reports of the so-called IIT. Unfortunately, these reports, which lack objectivity, impartiality, and professionalism, suffer also from many methodological and technical shortcomings and ambiguities became the basis for some subsequent decisions at the Ninety-Fourth Session of the Executive Council and the Twenty-Fifth Session of Conference of the States Parties.

The Islamic Republic of Iran would like to express its deep concern over the decision adopted at the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to suspend certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention. The decision, which was adopted only by 87 votes, in our view is an obstacle to the Syrian chemical dossier not an instrument to resolve it. My delegation considers the decision of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties as a heresy that sets a dangerous precedent which further complicates the situation.

My delegation is of the view that the continuation of the ongoing cooperation between the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW within a mutually agreed framework of collaboration would be helpful to resolve the remaining outstanding issues.

The universality of the Convention continues to remain one of the key elements to achieve the world free of chemical weapons, the noble goal enshrined in the Convention.

Since the adoption of the decision on the “Action Plan for the Universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention” (EC-M-23/DEC.3, 2003), while considerable progress was achieved in the realisation of the universality including in particular in the Middle East—by the accession of State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic—but still, much remains to be accomplished to ensure the universality of this important instrument in this region.

The Israeli regime with its clandestine WMD programme as well as its arsenals is a major threat to international and regional peace and security. The continued linkage policy of this regime rejecting categorically any commitments under the WMD instruments is a matter of great concern to international community. As required in the documents of relevant conferences, maximum restraint shall be maintained in chemicals trade with non-State actors. Needless to say, this outsider regime shall not enjoy the benefits of the Convention while maintaining and advancing its chemical weapons capabilities.

As the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Fifth Review Conference) approaches, the Islamic Republic of Iran hopes that the OPCW will return to its previous successful path with collective wisdom. To this end, all efforts should be made to avoid politicisation and to pave the way to mutual understanding and cooperation. In the same vein, the OPCW must leave this heavy burden and adhere to its original mandate bestowed in the Convention as a professional and technical Organisation. The OPCW should maintain impartiality and professionalism, perform its functions in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, and remain vigilant against any abuse of rights and powers under the Convention. The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that preserving tradition of consensus, avoiding politicisation, and the full and effective implementation of all provisions of the Convention, promoting universality, enhancing international cooperation on peaceful uses of chemistry, and reinforcing national and international capabilities on assistance and protection are the best ways to strengthen the global norm against chemical weapons use.

I wish to request this statement be circulated as an official document of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and posted on both the OPCW’s external server and the public website.

Thank you.

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