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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR A. V. SHULGIN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE
OPCW AT THE 100TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

First and foremost, allow me to, on behalf of the delegation of the Russian Federation, congratulate the honourable Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Mr M.D. Al Atiyah on his appointment as Chairperson of the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) and assure him of our full support and willingness to cooperate constructively.

Over the course of the past two years, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of the policy-making organs has continued uninterrupted. This was possible primarily thanks to the sensible actions of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and chairpersons of the Organisation’s policy-making organs. At the same time, we are pleased to note the improvements in the global public health situation and a return to normal life. In this regard, we believe that in the near future, the Council will be able to resume normal operations and hold full-format sessions.

The resumption of participation by delegations from the capitals is of particular relevancy in light of the attempts made by the Netherlands to restrict the work of the Russian diplomatic mission to the OPCW. The expulsion of Russian diplomats and the hindrance of the timely arrival of experts meant to participate in the sessions of the OPCW’s policy-making organs are a flagrant violation by the Dutch Government of its obligations under Article VIII of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”) and the OPCW Headquarters Agreement. We call upon the Council to pay extremely close attention to this problem, and the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to put a stop to the abuse of the privileges granted it by the States Parties to host an international organisation on its territory. These actions in The Hague are all the more unacceptable within the context of the preparations for the fifth review cycle of the Convention.

The Russian Federation firmly believes that the States Parties must strongly defend the Convention, unwaveringly fulfil its requirements, and take every possible effort to provide warnings about and prevent the use of toxic chemicals as weapons. This is why Russia regularly provides the States Parties with information about the chemical preparations of Ukrainian nationalists. The threat of chemical provocations in Ukraine remains extremely high. Their execution is fraught with horrible consequences for the civil population and the environment. To condone these types of criminal deeds—just like the disinformation campaign led by a



group of Western countries aimed at drawing attention away from the true organisers of these inhumane actions—is categorically impermissible.

It is impossible not to notice the parallels between the farce that is being played out in The Hague by the United States and the group of countries it leads in relation to the Ukrainian matter, the “Skripal affair”, the imagined poisoning of Mr Navalny, and the fabricated scenario in Syria. Guilty parties are designated in advance, based on the political climate; there is no coherent evidential basis whatsoever, including any motives for the use of chemical weapons. A single point of view is being forced, while inconvenient facts are peremptorily dismissed. This state of affairs is leading to the erosion of the regime of the disarmament and non-proliferation of chemical weapons, and undermines the fundamental values of our Organisation.

The investigation into instances of the alleged use of chemical weapons should be conducted in strict compliance with the provisions of the Verification Annex to the Convention on an impartial, objective, and professional basis. The creation and activities of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) do not meet these requirements. The Russian side has repeatedly emphasised that the decision of the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter “the Conference”) entitled “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons” (C-SS-4/DEC.3, dated 27 June 2018) reaches beyond the scope of the competencies of the Conference and impinges upon the exclusive authorities of the United Nations security Council. We call upon all States Parties to revert to working at the OPCW within the depoliticised legal scope of the Convention, and to work collectively on safeguarding the authority of the Organisation and the integrity of the Convention.

With regard to the Syrian chemical dossier, we welcome the willingness of Damascus to continue its constructive collaboration with the OPCW within the framework of their obligations and privileges under the Convention. We see the drawn-out pause with the next regular deployment of the Declaration Assessment Team investigating the declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention (DAT) as an artificial delay tactic in the process of clarifying the Syrian declaration. We call upon the Secretariat to refrain from using a language of ultimatums about a sincere State Party and to take all necessary measures to ensure the stable work of the DAT. We proceed based on the fact that the Secretariat has all the human resources and expert capabilities it needs to do so.

This year, the Organisation will be celebrating its anniversary—25 years since the entry-into-force of the Convention. Over that time, it has truly accomplished heroic tasks. However, it must be said that with the passing of one-quarter of a century, we are still far from our common end goal: the complete and total destruction of chemical stockpiles. The only possessor State today still has not met its key obligations under the Convention. Even with all the requisite financial, administrative, and technical resources, the United States of America still has not brought the country’s chemical demilitarisation to a close. We urge the United States to wrap up this process as soon as possible.

An important and integral part of the efforts to rid the world of chemical weapons is also the elimination of all abandoned chemical weapons. We urge Japan to accelerate the pace of the work under way in China.

The Russian Federation consistently speaks in favour of mobilising international efforts in the fight against one of the most underestimated threats of our times: chemical terrorism. It is with concern that we note the conclusions of the Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD), which was established by the United Nations Security Council. This body has not only managed to identify approximately 3,000 victims and witnesses of chemical terrorist acts, but has also established that Da'esh had its own military chemical programme, including research activities, production, and preparations for the use of chemical weapons. Nationals from all over the world—the Middle East, Africa, Central and South Asia, and the Northern Caucasus, as well as cells in Southeast Asia—are involved in this international terrorist organisation. Chemical terrorism has become a reality that requires us to take decisive, consistent, and urgent collective actions.

We firmly believe that a constructive dialogue on this and other hot-button issues on the Organisation's agenda—as part of preparations for the Fifth Review Conference examining the operations of the Convention—will be able to boost the momentum of the collective efforts of the States Parties in strengthening the disarmament regime and the non-proliferation of chemical weapons. The Russian Federation is fully invested in having the OPCW—in light of its unique nature—maintain its effectiveness and ability to respond quickly and adequately to new challenges and threats, and to manage its activities on a depoliticised basis, while taking decisions on all issues based on a consensus.

We request that this statement be distributed as an official document of the 100th Session of the Council and published on Catalyst and the OPCW website.

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