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OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AT ITS 101ST SESSION

1. I warmly welcome all delegations to this 101st Session of the Executive Council.
2. At the outset, I wish to thank Ambassador Ziad Al Atiyah, the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the OPCW, for his able stewardship of this Council. Ambassador, in this defining moment for multilateral disarmament and for the OPCW, I am confident that your wealth of experience will guide the Council session to a successful outcome.
3. We convene, once again, under less stringent COVID-19 measures owing to the lifting of restrictions by the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Nonetheless, for our collective health and security, we must respect the guidelines approved by the Council to limit the spread of the virus, which is still prevalent, by reducing the duration of this session to the extent possible.
4. We meet at a time of heightened risks and challenges for international peace and security. Neither the OPCW nor the norm against the use of chemical weapons are isolated from this context.
5. The risk of the use of chemical weapons in Ukraine is a concern for us all. The Secretariat has been providing assistance and protection to Ukraine, upon its request, in several different ways under Article X. The Secretariat continues to monitor the situation and remains in contact with the Permanent Representations of the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Communications between both countries have been shared with all States Parties, as well as those between both countries and the Secretariat.
6. This difficult global context is a reminder of the unfinished OPCW agenda that lies ahead. More than ever before, the international community needs to continue working to further develop better and stronger disarmament regimes in the field of weapons of mass destruction.
7. Between August this year and May next year, in a span of less than a year, three major treaties related to weapons of mass destruction are going through their respective regular review conference process. In August, the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons concluded without agreement on its final document. The Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention will follow in November. And the Fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention will take place in May next year, as you know. In this process, we are faced with the task of reviewing past achievements. We also have the opportunity to respond to existing and future disputes in a tense period for disarmament diplomacy.



8. The success of the Fifth Review Conference will hinge on the active and constructive engagement of every State Party. The work has already begun, under the competent leadership of Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia. The work of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference, chaired by Ambassador Kuusing, is ongoing, with the participation of all of you, representatives of the States Parties.
9. States Parties have already demonstrated a commitment to ensuring the OPCW's preparedness for the future through their support of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre). The construction of the Centre is progressing well and respecting the budget. We are now finding solutions to the usual problems in the final stages. The completion of construction is expected at the end of this year, despite the impacts of the pandemic, global inflation, and supply chain constraints.
10. I recall that, on 23 September 2021, hardly more than a year ago, we were all gathered at the site for the first pillar ceremony, officially starting the construction of the ChemTech Centre. Hardly over a year later, we are now in the final stages of finishing the building. I wish to reiterate my sincere appreciation for the contributions that have been provided by 53 countries, the European Union, and other donors. In this final stage of the project, the Secretariat is working closely with the construction company, Dura Vermeer, to ensure that the quality in the completion is of the highest standards, as is the case with the rest of the building. Additionally, and in particular, the global energy crisis justifies the installation of additional solar panels to ensure the highest possible degree of energy self-sufficiency. These measures will generate substantial savings in the running costs of the building. I encourage contributions from States Parties to meet this important sustainability goal.
11. Programmes and activities are planned to commence at the Centre in spring 2023, following an inauguration ceremony. The details and date of the ceremony will be shared with all States Parties in due course.
12. The Secretariat has issued a Note providing information on the anticipated new programmes and activities that could be delivered at the ChemTech Centre (S/2102/2022, dated 30 September 2022). I once again wish to thank the States Parties that have communicated detailed written feedback and comments on the previous Note related to this matter, issued by the Secretariat in March (S/2034/2022, dated 1 March 2022). These comments and suggestions have been considered while developing the new proposed activities. As expected, each of the nine new programmes and activities identified thus far will require a certain level of additional funding and human resources for full implementation. Further donations would enhance the Secretariat's ability to launch these projects, and thereby contribute to efforts to strengthen the implementation of the Convention.
13. Beyond its significance in enabling the Organisation's adaptation, the Centre will provide the physical infrastructure to put in place additional business continuity capabilities for the Secretariat.
14. Alongside that effort, reinforcing the physical security of the OPCW Headquarters remains a top priority following the storming of the premises on 3 December 2021.

15. The Secretariat continues to make efforts to improve the physical security of the Headquarters building. The new Headquarters garage gates are scheduled to be installed in mid-October right after this session. Preparations for the construction works to upgrade the security critical areas on several floors of the building are being finalised. The installation is expected to be completed in the first half of 2023. Additionally, the preparations for the establishment of a secure compartment in the reception area are ongoing.
16. During the intersessional period, the Host Country's security services finalised their assessment of the OPCW Headquarters. Their conclusions and recommendations are fully aligned with the Secretariat's internal security risk assessment, on which I briefed the Council at its last two sessions. It confirms the recommendations for upgrading the physical security of the OPCW Headquarters.
17. As I also informed the Council at its last two sessions, the implementation of these security measures, including the replacement of the perimeter fence, the security gates, and the Front Guard House, will require EUR 5.7 million in additional funding. The Secretariat's security team continues its consultations with States Parties interested in further assisting the Secretariat on this matter, and I am encouraged by the responses so far. I seize this opportunity to convey appreciation to the States Parties that have already made contributions.
18. The Secretariat remains in permanent contact with the relevant Dutch authorities and continues to request adequate security support. This includes the provision of police protection on the boundaries and in the vicinity of the Headquarters. These measures are in line with the local authorities' responsibilities under the Host Country's international legal framework. The number of demonstrations outside the building is stretching the Secretariat's resources for maintaining control and authority of the OPCW Headquarters. This is affecting security staffing and the corresponding budget.
19. In addition to physical security, cybersecurity remains a concern. Phishing, malware, and perimeter attacks have continued since the last session of the Executive Council. To give an example, the OPCW website and other public Internet pages of the Organisation have been attacked approximately 30,000 times during the intersessional period. The Secretariat will continue to make best use of the resources at its disposal to counter these threats and to inform States Parties of any additional needs. In this context, I wish to thank all voluntary contributors that have provided resources to address this situation.
20. Notwithstanding these circumstances, the Secretariat has continued to deliver on the mandates assigned by the Convention and through decisions of the Conference and the Council. It has done so despite the well-known financial constraints.
21. The policy of biennial budgeting, adopted by the Conference of the States Parties in 2021, enables the Secretariat to conduct its mandated activities more sustainably and efficiently.
22. I wish to thank the co-facilitators, Mr Jerzy Gierasimiuk of Poland and Mr Frank Groome of Ireland, for organising consultations during the intersessional period. The draft mid-biennium revised Programme and Budget for 2022–2023 is before the Council for recommendation to the Conference.

23. In the mid-biennium review, the Secretariat has primarily integrated the impact of unforeseeable significant global inflation. The Dutch Central Bank projections that were used in 2021 to prepare the biennial budget for 2022–2023, as well as to evaluate the evolving physical security requirements of OPCW facilities, have substantially increased in the last few months. As a result, the costs are much higher than expected.
24. The financing for the 2023 draft budget revision includes proposals for timely and effective use of the 2020 cash surplus to liquidate the 2019 cash deficit. As you know, cash surplus situations emerge when States Parties pay their assessed contributions too late in the year to allow the Secretariat to use them that same year. The proposed measures will avoid any changes to assessed contributions in 2023. It will also provide for periodic and necessary replenishment of the special funds for OPCW equipment and infrastructure.
25. The Secretariat anticipates a requirement to draw upon its Working Capital Fund before the end of November to be able to carry out its approved programme activities. This is a consequence of assessed contributions not yet received from some States Parties.
26. I appeal to States Parties to ensure the timely payment of assessed contributions so that the Organisation's Programme may continue without hindrance. I recall that, in accordance with the regulations, the payments of assessed contributions are due as at the end of January each year.
27. Delivering on its mandate means that the Secretariat can attract and retain a capable and committed workforce. Yet, mainly because of the impact of COVID-19 on ways of working, a higher-than-normal rate of separations is taking place globally in many organisations. The OPCW is not immune to this trend, as it currently experiences the lowest ever number of occupied fixed-term posts in its history. With this in mind, and with the constraints of the tenure policy, the Secretariat needs to find ways to ensure that it retains staff, and with them, their experience, skills, and knowledge. I wish to commend all staff members of the Secretariat for their outstanding work in this endeavour, and in these conditions. Thanks to their efforts and dedication, we continued to deliver, even during the most difficult times.
28. In light of this situation, the Secretariat has circulated an addendum to the report on implementation of the tenure policy in 2021 (EC-100/DG.8/Add.1, dated 28 September 2022). The rehiring of former inspectors has been crucial to the operational effectiveness of the Organisation. This procedure has been implemented in a regular manner since the adoption of the Conference decisions on this matter in 2014, 2017, and 2019. Based on the authority given by those Conference decisions, the Director-General rehired inspectors in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2021. In those decisions, the Conference underscored the importance of maintaining our chemical weapons-specific expertise and of ensuring the transfer of knowledge and experience to new generations of inspectors.
29. The draft decision to rehire inspectors, submitted to the Council for its consideration at this session, proposes to open the rehiring of inspectors in 2023.

30. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in fewer inspections in 2020, 2021, and 2022, and therefore fewer opportunities for inspectors recruited in this period to gain on-site experience. Such a necessary experience would have enabled them to be promoted as Inspection Team Leaders. Additionally, in 2023 there will be a significant turnover of a total of 21 inspectors who will tenure out. All of them work at the level of Inspection Team Leader. As you know, the tenure policy and other governance issues form a part of the discussions for the Fifth Review Conference in May next year. This means that a possible change in the tenure policy will need more time, which is understandable. Yet, the implementation of the core mandates of the Convention cannot be put on hold until then. This is why the Organisation once again needs to extend the decisions on rehiring inspectors. Finally, the additional need for experienced inspectors will be essential in delivering the future programmes and activities anticipated to take place at the ChemTech Centre when it becomes operational in spring 2023.
31. I now turn to activities mandated to the Secretariat, beginning with the Syrian Arab Republic chemical weapons dossier.
32. On 28 September, the Secretariat provided an informal briefing to States Parties related to the dossier.
33. Through the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Secretariat has continued its efforts to clarify the shortcomings noted in the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration.
34. As I previously informed the Council, since April 2021, the Secretariat's attempts to organise the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority have remained unsuccessful. The Syrian Arab Republic has continued to refuse issuing an entry visa to the lead technical expert from the DAT. The Syrian Arab Republic has also conditioned a possible limited round of consultations in Beirut, Lebanon, to the exclusion from the meetings of the same DAT expert. Today, pending a change of attitude from the Syrian National Authority, the Secretariat has again proposed that shortcomings in the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration be addressed through the submission of pending declarations and other documents. A similar situation already took place during the period between June 2016 and April 2019. Notwithstanding, I again stress that such an exchange brings fewer outcomes as compared to the DAT's deployments to the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic.
35. Accordingly, through a note verbale dated 14 September, the Secretariat provided the Syrian Arab Republic with the list of pending declarations and other documents requested by DAT since 2019. The Secretariat further requested the Syrian Arab Republic to expeditiously submit these pending declarations and documents, as well as declarations required under decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 (dated 27 September 2013), EC-94/DEC.2 (dated 9 July 2020), and C-25/DEC.9 (dated 21 April 2021).
36. I wish to restate that the Syrian Arab Republic has an obligation to allow full and unfettered access to personnel designated by the OPCW under the Convention, United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), and the corresponding decisions of the OPCW policy-making organs.

37. Pursuant to paragraph 11 of the Council decision adopted in November 2016, the Secretariat conducted the ninth round of inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) from 11 to 18 September 2022. The outcome of this round of inspections will be reported in due course.
38. The OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) is currently working on allegations that have been assessed as credible. Since the Council's last session, the FFM has carried out one deployment to collect further information regarding allegations under review, on which States Parties were briefed on 28 September. Simultaneously, the FFM is in contact with the Syrian Arab Republic to organise interviews of witnesses regarding allegations of chemical weapons use that it is currently working on. The FFM will report on the allegations under investigation in due time.
39. The Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) continues to make progress on its investigations of several incidents reported by the FFM related to the identification of perpetrators of the alleged use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Its next reports will be issued in due course.
40. Once again, I recall the decision adopted by the Conference of the States Parties at its April 2021 special session, entitled "Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" (C-25/DEC.9), which suspended certain rights and privileges of that State Party. The Conference decided that these rights will be reinstated once I have reported that the Syrian Arab Republic has completed the requested measures adopted in the July 2020 Executive Council decision. To date, the Syrian Arab Republic has not completed any of these measures.
41. The Council was informed in previous briefings about my invitation over a year ago to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic to an in-person meeting in The Hague or any other mutually agreed location. The goal of such a meeting is to identify ways to ensure that the Syrian Arab Republic complies in the shortest time possible with all of its obligations under the Convention, the relevant decisions of the OPCW policy-making organs, and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). No communication through the mutually agreed framework of designated focal points has been received by the Secretariat from the Syrian side to date, responding to the Secretariat's proposal of 20 December 2021. Instead, through a note verbale dated 21 September, the Syrian Arab Republic suggested a preliminary meeting in Beirut, Lebanon, between the Syrian side and the Secretariat to prepare and agree on the working agenda for this high-level meeting. The Secretariat responded to this suggestion by recalling that, as was agreed, both parties had already appointed in the summer of 2021 focal points in charge of the preparations, including the determination of the date, location, agenda, and composition of the delegations. Consequently, the Secretariat and the Syrian side have agreed to make full use of this channel of communication to prepare a possible technical meeting in Beirut. The Secretariat will keep the Council informed on the evolution of this matter in due course.
42. I now turn to updates on the Secretariat's other activities.
43. The International Cooperation and Assistance Division has continued to deliver in-person capacity-building activities, in tandem with the delivery of online capacity-building support. Since the last session of the Council, 25 capacity-building events have been conducted, including six online and 19 in-person, benefitting 724 participants from all geographical regions.

44. On destruction-related activities, the Secretariat has maintained its verification activities at chemical weapons destruction facilities in the United States of America. As of 30 September 2022, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by the United States of 27,314 metric tonnes (MT), or 98.36%, of its Category 1 chemical weapons stockpile. The United States plans to complete the destruction of the remaining 1.64% of its stockpile by the proposed deadline of 2023. Overall, as of 30 September 2022, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by possessor States Parties of 71,849 MT, or 99.37%, of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles. The destruction of the remaining stockpiles remains on course to be completed by September 2023.
45. As was decided by the Conference last year, 180 chemical industry inspections have been planned for 2022. Of the 37 States Parties scheduled to receive inspections in 2022, 25 have already completed their entire Article VI chemical industry inspection plans.
46. As I reported to the Council at its last session, travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will not allow the Secretariat to complete the 2022 inspection plan in full. The Secretariat appreciates the efforts of National Authorities to allow significant progress in chemical industry inspections this year. The Secretariat also continues to work with concerned States Parties to responsibly implement the inspection plan.
47. China and Japan have continued bilateral consultations on the excavation, recovery, and destruction of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan at various sites in China. As of 31 August 2022, a total of 60,170 of the 89,836 declared items of abandoned chemical weapons (ACW) on the territory of China have been reported by Japan as destroyed. Because of the current situation regarding COVID-19, no ACW inspections have been carried out in China since the outbreak of the pandemic. On 13 July 2022, the Thirty-Sixth Trilateral Meeting between China, Japan, and the Secretariat was held in a virtual mode. The resumption of ACW verification activities was one of the main agenda points for this trilateral meeting, including through remote ACW verification activities. Once agreed, such a measure will allow for the mitigation of the current impossibility to conduct in-person inspections because of the necessary measures introduced to address the COVID-19 pandemic. A destruction plan beyond 2022 for the chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China has also been submitted to this Council session.
48. Furthermore, China and Japan hosted a virtual Executive Council visit to the Haerbaling ACW destruction and storage facility on 15 September 2022. This event was useful in demonstrating the work that is being carried out by China and Japan to destroy ACW and the developments at the site to enable a greater number to be destroyed.
49. The Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, ably chaired by Ambassador Madonsela of South Africa, remains an important platform for all States Parties to actively engage on solutions to the challenge of countering chemical terrorism. At the Group's last meeting on 30 September, the Secretariat delivered a presentation on responses received from States Parties to a survey seeking their views on the main elements of the OPCW's efforts in this area. States that responded to the survey accorded a high priority to capacity building for national implementation, especially for the development of tools such as guidelines for chemical security. The Group discussed the results of the survey with a view to informing the preparatory process for the Fifth Review Conference.

50. The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) plays an essential role in providing scientific advice to the Director-General, which helps to ensure that the OPCW keeps pace with advances in science and technology. I have appointed three new members to the SAB: Dr Catharina Müller-Buschbaum of Germany, Dr Meehir Palit of India, and Dr Karim Ben Ali of Tunisia. I congratulate them on their appointment and wish them all the best in their important endeavours. They will begin their terms on 1 January 2023. I wish to note that the lack of female candidates for the SAB was disappointing. I encourage States Parties to propose more female candidates when the next call is announced in early 2023.
51. The Advisory Board on Education and Outreach also met during the intersessional period. At that session, the Board appointed Professor Magda Bauta Solés of Cuba as its Chairperson and Professor Supawan Tantayanon of Thailand as its Vice-Chairperson for 2023. I would like to congratulate them and wish them a productive year ahead.
52. In the current global security environment, implementation of the Convention requires, more than ever, generating and sustaining support from a broad range of stakeholders through regular interaction.
53. In September, I was pleased to visit the Spiez Laboratory in Switzerland, an OPCW designated laboratory and a valuable partner in our efforts to develop the capabilities of other laboratories.
54. The Deputy Director-General has just returned from El Salvador where, among other activities, she opened a regional workshop on best practices in the development of legislative and regulatory frameworks on chemical security.
55. Additionally, the Secretariat has gradually resumed our established outreach initiatives, in both in-person and hybrid formats. Since the Council's last session, the following three activities have taken place:
 - (a) the induction workshop for newly arrived delegates;
 - (b) the training programme for United Nations Disarmament Fellows; and
 - (c) the T.M.C. Asser Institute's annual training programme on disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
56. On Sunday, 16 October, the OPCW Headquarters will again open its doors to the public from 11:00 to 17:00 as part of the annual "The Hague Open Day". We expect to receive an important number of visitors of all ages.
57. Council members will be interested to know that 359 individuals from 169 organisations have applied to attend the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties. This record high number of applications demonstrates sustained interest from civil society in the activities of the Organisation.
58. I wish to seize this opportunity to encourage States Parties once again to consider nominating suitable candidates for the OPCW-The Hague Award by the extended deadline of 16 October. I thank those who have already done so.

59. I commenced my remarks by alluding to the serious tensions we are witnessing in the international peace and security landscape. The current environment is not as favourable to multilateralism as it was 25 years ago in 1997, at the time of entry into force of the Convention. Success over the next quarter century will require a greater commitment from all States Parties.
60. You can rest assured of the Secretariat's commitment to fulfilling our mandates, with expertise, dedication, and independence.

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