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ISRAEL

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MODI EPHRAIM REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE STATE OF ISRAEL AS A SIGNATORY STATE TO THE OPCW AT THE
TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES
PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,

At the outset, please allow us to congratulate the Chairperson on assuming the position for the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties and let us assure you of our full cooperation.

Since its establishment, the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) has achieved a great deal in promoting values and creating verifiable norms to ensure the security and wellbeing of the international community as a whole. History has taught us that prohibition, compliance and verification are all essential in order to safeguard the norm against the use of chemical weapons. Past uses of chemical weapons, particularly in the Middle East, underscores the need for the international community to support the critical work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its mechanisms.

Nine years ago, the Security Council mandated the destruction of Syria’s chemical weapons programme. Yet there is overwhelming evidence that Syria’s initial disclosures of chemical weapons are not accurate or complete and must be subject to continued scrutiny.

The last Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) reports are joined by additional reports and statements made by the OPCW Director-General regarding gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the Syrian declaration. This poses a source of much concern that must be addressed. Israel fully supports the important work of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), in carrying out the task of attributing the chemical attacks to their actual perpetrators and looks forward to the publication of the IIT’s upcoming reports.

The IIT reports from April 2020 and April 2021, attributed responsibility to the Syrian government for five separate chemical weapon attacks on civilians, which took place in 2017 and 2018. The IIT’s reports followed numerous findings of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the OPCW-UN Joint Investigating Mechanism (JIM), which have been sharing crucial information since the first time Syria used chemical weapons on its own citizens in 2012.



The IIT's reports clearly call on the Syrian Government to cooperate with the OPCW and the international community, in rectifying the gaps and discrepancies in its declaration on chemical weapons, and to take full responsibility for its actions in violation of the Convention, as well as, with regard to destroying its chemical weapons arsenal.

Having failed to fulfil its commitments within the specified time, this Conference of the States Parties, suspended certain rights and privileges of Syria in April 2021, under the Convention. Indeed, there is irrefutable evidence that Syria has been avoiding accountability while continuing to evade cooperation with the OPCW. Furthermore, it remains unclear. What chemical weapon capabilities Syria has maintained and what are the regime's intentions with regard to future use of chemical weapons? It is vital that the international community remain vigilant in addressing Syria's dangerous non-compliance. It must act in order to prevent the further erosion of the absolute norm against the use of chemical weapons.

Mr Chairperson, the continued use of chemical weapons remains deeply concerning, especially when factoring in the ambitions of States Parties and non-State actors to acquire and use these capabilities in the future. The international community must confront this challenge effectively and curtail any possibility for future use of chemical weapons.

Israel actively participated in the negotiations and became a signatory State to the Convention in 1993, as a sign that it shares the values, norms and goals that the Convention represents and promotes. It is also important to note that Israel acceded to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, adheres to export control regimes, including the Australia Group, and traditionally supports the United Nations General Assembly Chemical Weapons Convention First Committee resolution. We hope that others in the region who have not done so yet will join the Convention as a testament of their commitment to the norms and values it represents.

In conclusion, in the face of continued violations, we call upon the international community to stand united to ensure accountability. An unwavering message must be sent to those who consider violating the Convention. We must remember what is at stake – our collective security.

Lastly, I wish to respond to the Palestinian statement, which mentioned my country. Israel regrets the exploitation of this forum by the Palestinian delegation in order to promote political agendas. We see the Palestinian statement as a clear abuse of the Convention and a futile attempt to distract from other critical items on the agenda, which has the potential to erode the credibility of the Organisation. Israel appreciates the professional nature of the Conference of the States Parties and will continue to seek constructive dialogue in this forum.

Before concluding, we would like to address the nature of the participation of the Palestinian delegation in the Conference of the States Parties. Israel wishes to note, for the record, that like many other States, it does not consider that the Palestinian entity satisfies the criteria for statehood and does not recognise it as such. The nature of Palestinian participation in the Conference of the States Parties does not reflect any change and is without prejudice to the legal status of the Palestinian entity under international law.

We would like to request that this statement be designated as an official document of this Conference and be posted on both the OPCW external server and public website. Thank you, Mr Chairperson.