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REPUBLIC OF KOREA

**STATEMENT BY MR YUNG-SUH PARK ON BEHALF OF H.E. AMBASSADOR
YEONDOO JEONG PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF
KOREA TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE
CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

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

First, I express my sincere congratulations to H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Philemon Madonsela of the Republic of South Africa, on your assumption of the Chairperson of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties. This session of the Conference will achieve meaningful outcomes with the benefit of your able leadership and abundant experience. I assure you of my delegation's full support for the success of the session of the Conference of the States Parties. I also appreciate H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway for his outstanding endeavours over the past year.

My appreciation also goes to Director-General Fernando Arias and the staff members of the Technical Secretariat for their tireless efforts to fully implement the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention"). Their professionalism and devotion are truly commendable.

The international community has yielded tremendous achievements since the Convention was adopted, and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) was established 25 years ago. Over 99% of all declared chemical weapons have been verifiably destroyed. The Convention has indeed become a near-global treaty, thus cementing the global norm of prohibition of all chemical weapons. In addition, the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology will open soon and is expected to serve as a critical hub for addressing new and evolving chemical threats. These joint efforts have significantly contributed to ensuring a safer world through a commitment to universal norms, including the prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction.

Nonetheless, these achievements and efforts are unfortunately overshadowed by serious challenges to international peace and security. The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine is a flagrant violation of international law, including the United Nations Charter. Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence must be respected. Therefore, we call on Russia to immediately comply with its obligations under all international law. The loss of innocent lives caused by the use of force cannot be tolerated anymore.



Moreover, we express our grave concern over the possibility of the misuse of toxic chemicals in Ukraine. We commend the Technical Secretariat for closely monitoring the situation in Ukraine and request it remains vigilant in addressing any possible use of chemical weapons. We are also concerned about repeated unsubstantiated allegations sowing doubt and spreading false information about chemical provocations. In this regard, we reject any attempt to undermine the credibility of the Convention and hinder the independent work of the Technical Secretariat.

Mr. Chairperson, the OPCW has made significant progress toward dealing with allegations of chemical weapons use in the Syrian Arab Republic and its initial declaration. My delegation appreciates the work of the Technical Secretariat, including the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), and its sincere efforts to perform its mandate in a transparent, independent, impartial, and professional way. We welcome the two reports by the FFM published this January and February, we express our grave concerns over their findings that there are reasonable grounds to believe that chemical weapons were used in Marea and Kafr Zeita in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

However, the chemical weapons issues in Syria remain the greatest concern for all of us. Unfortunately, we have yet to notice any meaningful progress for the last year. Cooperation between the OPCW and Syria has become even more deteriorated. We are deeply concerned by Syria's apparent refusal to grant full access to the DAT for more than a year and its failure to provide the requested information to the OPCW in a timely manner. We urge Syria to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat to redress the situation and come into compliance with the Convention, particularly as requested by the decision of the Conference of the States Parties dated 21 April 2021, for which the Republic of Korea joined as a co-sponsor.

The use of a novichok group nerve agent in poisoning Mr Alexei Navalny in 2020 is another grave concern for all States Parties over the past two years. My delegation calls on Russia, in the territory of which the attack took place, to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat to disclose without any more delay all the circumstances surrounding this use of a chemical weapon.

Mr Chairperson, the OPCW must be equipped with adequate resources to successfully implement its mandates while responding to the fast-changing global environment. The Draft Revised Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2023 is well adjusted to overcome unforeseen significant inflation and effectively keep its key tasks. My government supports the amended proposal and encourages all delegations to render their support.

We are delighted to see that the construction of the Centre of Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) is on track as scheduled and will be finished by the end of this year. The new Centre will significantly enhance the overall capacity of the OPCW and States Parties to address future challenges in the chemical field and facilitate the use of chemicals peacefully and safely. In this connection, the Republic of Korea has made its annual contribution to this important project since 2017 and pledges additional funding of EUR 30,000 this year. We look forward to the successful opening of the ChemTech Centre scheduled for next year.

Bearing in mind the importance of regional cooperation in improving chemical safety and security, the Republic of Korea has been hosting the Seoul workshop with the Technical Secretariat to share best practices and knowledge and explore better ways to fully implement

the Convention among chemical experts in the Asian region. The tenth workshop was successfully held in-person this month. We hope this workshop continues to serve as a useful venue for regional countries.

Maintaining national readiness is pivotal in responding to any possible chemical emergency. In this context, my government launched a new tabletop exercise (TTX)—focused on detailed procedures in initiating investigation against chemical weapon attacks—this November, through cooperation with the Technical Secretariat. As a part of our efforts to fully implement the Convention, we will keep building our preparedness and strengthening close cooperation with the OPCW.

Universal adherence to the Convention has been a top priority for all of us. It will be of greater importance once all declared chemical weapons are eliminated next year, as expected. Indeed, universality is critical for the total effectiveness of the Convention. My delegation urges the four remaining States not Party to the Convention to join it as early as possible without any preconditions. We appreciate the Technical Secretariat's tailor-made approach to each of them and request it continue its utmost efforts to achieve this urgent task.

Mr Chairperson, the need for the OPCW to skilfully adapt to newly emerging challenges and prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons is more pressing. Against this backdrop, the Fifth Review Conference in May of next year should provide a valuable chance to contemplate how to develop a stronger, more responsible, and more effective system against potential chemical threats on the path ahead. I would like to express my gratitude to H.E. Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia for his leadership in gathering our collective wisdom. We look forward to candid and in-depth discussions among States Parties and will constructively participate in this process to achieve successful outcomes of the Fifth Review Conference.

In closing, I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session of the Conference of the States Parties and be published on the OPCW website and external server.

Thank you.

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