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STATE OF PALESTINE

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR RAWAN SULAIMAN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STATE OF PALESTINE TO THE
OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE
OF THE STATES PARTIES**

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Excellencies, Heads of delegation,
Ladies and gentlemen,

May peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you.

Allow me at the outset to congratulate H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Madonsela of South Africa on his election as Chairperson of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties. We are fully confident that, with his wise leadership and his diplomatic abilities and experience, he will steer this important Conference towards success and the achievement of its desired objectives. We affirm our continuous support for his efforts in this regard.

We take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks to the Chairperson of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference, H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway for steering the Conference with professionalism and competence.

I also wish to extend my greetings and appreciation to the Director-General of the OPCW, H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his informative and comprehensive report to this session and for the continuous efforts that he and his team in the Technical Secretariat are making to promote and energise the role of the OPCW in eliminating weapons of mass destruction and implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention.

My country's delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the OPCW on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Convention and China.

Universality is a key aspect of the Convention. The achievements made in the universality of the Convention, with the number of States Parties now totalling 193 States and representing 98% of the world population, are evidence of its international standing and the large support for its lofty objectives. The Convention promotes States Parties' security and international



peace and security and is a protection guaranteed by international law. Any threat to one individual is a threat to humanity as a whole.

The State of Palestine firmly believes that achieving true peace in the Middle East begins with making the region free of all weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons. Israel, the illegitimate occupying power, is the only State that currently possesses an enormous stockpile of these deadly weapons and continues to use these weapons against unarmed Palestinian civilians. Israel also uses its settlements established on occupied Palestinian land as illegal industrial zones, including chemical plants, with direct impact on the life and health of our people. This is due to the absence of any form of international control on production in these illegitimate plants. I call for the establishment of a committee to verify these chemical plants established by the Israeli occupying power in the illegitimate settlements and their impact on the life of my people.

I call on Israel to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Signing the Convention without acceding to it grants Israel some rights without any obligations, while keeping it immune and protected against all forms of accountability.

There is need for continuous support for the OPCW's efforts to achieve significant progress in all aspects of international cooperation, for capacity-building activities for the implementation of Articles VII and X of the Convention, as well as for the efforts required in the area of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under the Convention, with the aim of advancing the technological development of all States Parties. In this regard, there is an urgent need for a discussion within the OPCW policy-making organs on the implementation of Article XI of the Convention to ensure that a strategy is developed which would include an executive action plan that allows for conducting systematic needs assessments and periodic evaluations of these programmes, in order to improve their effectiveness and sustainable impact, taking into consideration on the whole all activities undertaken by the Organisation in the area of international cooperation. This would also allow for the full application of the components of an agreed framework for the full implementation of Article XI of the Convention, including national capacity building in the safe use of chemicals for purposes not prohibited thereunder; promoting cooperation and the exchange of expertise among scientific communities, academic institutions, the chemical industry, non-governmental organisations, and regional and international institutions; as well as the measures taken by States Parties and the OPCW to facilitate the peaceful exchange of chemicals, equipment, and scientific and technical information relating to the development and application of chemistry, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. The transfer of substantial funds in excess of EUR 2 million from the International Cooperation and Assistance Programme since 2015 is a cause for concern. This Programme is important for developing countries as Member States of the OPCW. Unfortunately, this policy of reducing the budget allocations for the Programme started eight years ago. The reduction needs to be compensated and redressed by looking into the practical options available, including through keeping unused funds from the International Cooperation and Assistance Programme in a special fund. The full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI of the Convention is paramount.

We appreciate the efforts made so far by the facilitator for Article XI of the Convention. We encourage the continuation of comprehensive communication and constructive cooperation with all States Parties. We note with appreciation that the drafting committee has completed its work of streamlining the list of ideas from the aforementioned review and

evaluation workshops. We look forward to fruitful discussions in the ongoing facilitations under Article XI of the Convention.

The State of Palestine highly appreciates the technical nature of the OPCW's work. Therefore, we call on all international parties to work closely together in order to preserve the nature of the OPCW's work by maintaining the customary practice of consensus in decision making to avoid politicisation and polarisation which could undermine the integrity of the Convention and the unity of our Organisation. We also believe that dialogue and cooperation among all States Parties are the best way to help achieve the aspirations of this Organisation and its Convention.

The OPCW has achieved tremendous success thanks to the continuous support of the States Parties. In this respect, the State of Palestine underscores the importance of the future priorities of the OPCW and commends the work accomplished thus far by the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW.

Also, the State of Palestine supports the ongoing consultations by the Open-ended Working Group on the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference scheduled to be held in May 2023. We stress the importance of the Working Group and encourage its close cooperation with all States Parties and the various regional groups in order to make every effort to reach consensus.

Since its accession to the Convention, the State of Palestine has been implementing its obligations under the Convention and developing a series of national implementation measures, practices, actions, and legislations. We highly appreciate the encouragement and support provided to us by the Technical Secretariat to this end. We are confident that the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW will play its role in helping the States Parties that lack adequate resources obtain appropriate assistance and technical support so that they can implement the Convention fully.

The participation of the State of Palestine in this and other conferences aiming at disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is an expression of the political will to achieve the objectives of mankind as a whole and to accede to all disarmament instruments and conventions, including the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is also an expression of Palestine's principled positions on countering the proliferation of these weapons in order to achieve international security on a fair and equitable basis, as well as regional security, in order to make the Middle East region free of all these weapons. My country has incessantly called upon the international community to provide the necessary support for this objective, which constitutes a legitimate right of the people of the region and a fundamental pillar for enhancing regional and international security and peace.

The State of Palestine takes pride in its accession to the other instruments prohibiting weapons of mass destruction. There is a moral and legal necessity to ensure the complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and protect humanity from the existential threat and catastrophic humanitarian consequences of these weapons.

In conclusion, we wish to underscore the full commitment of the State of Palestine and its cooperation with all other States Parties for the success of this Conference in order to build an organisation that is capable of truly freeing the world of all chemical weapons.

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We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the OPCW public website and on Catalyst.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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