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NORTH MACEDONIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR BETI JACHEVA PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA TO THE
OPCW AT THE FIFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE
STATES PARTIES TO REVIEW THE OPERATION OF THE CHEMICAL
WEAPONS CONVENTION**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Representatives of chemical industry and civil society,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to warmly congratulate H.E. Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast from the Netherlands on his election as Chairperson of the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Fifth Review Conference). I am confident that he will guide us to a successful outcome of this session of the Review Conference. H.E. Ambassador van der Kwast enjoys our full support.

I would also like to extend my most sincere gratitude and appreciation to H.E. Ambassador Lauri Kuusing from Estonia, for his excellent leadership and his open and inclusive approach in preparation of this Conference as Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group.

Equally important, let me reiterate the full support to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), its Director-General, and the Technical Secretariat for their competence and professionalism in fulfilling the mandate of the Organisation. Over the past five years, the OPCW, as one of the most important foundations of international disarmament and non-proliferation regime, has demonstrated its resilience and adaptability in the face of unprecedented challenges.

North Macedonia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. On this occasion, I would like to highlight the following points in my national capacity.

North Macedonia sees the Fifth Review Conference as an important opportunity for States Parties to shape up the future activities of the OPCW in order to enable the Organisation to continue implementing its core mandate - to achieve a world safe from the threat of chemical weapons.



The moment of pride is that the OPCW has already verified the destruction of more than 99% of declared stockpiles of chemical weapons, and hopefully this year we will have completed the destruction of all declared chemical weapons.

Unfortunately, in recent years, we have witnessed an increase in confirmed cases of chemical weapons use, as well as new and emerging threats related to the possible use of chemical weapons, such as from non-State actors and small-scale targeted use of chemical weapons.

The use or threat of use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances is unacceptable and goes against the obligations we all undertook under the Convention. Therefore, this must be unequivocally condemned and those responsible must and will be held accountable.

Against this background, we call for a constructive approach towards making real progress at this important Conference, by putting the overarching goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention in the centre of our discussions and working towards producing a strong outcome document at the end of this Review Conference. The provisional draft text prepared by the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group is a good basis for reaching this goal.

This Review Conference is the right moment to ensure that the Organisation remains relevant and is equipped to respond to today's challenges. As a very important step in this direction, we see and warmly welcome the recently inaugurated OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech centre) that will significantly enhance the operational and capacity building capabilities of the OPCW and will help in addressing the current challenges. We also welcome all the initiatives towards improving the gender equality and diversity in all aspects of the Convention implementation and within OPCW. We also support the initiative to look into the current tenure policy and introduce necessary adaptations to it, by enabling more flexibility, without compromising the non-career character of the OPCW.

We also underscore the importance of engaging all relevant stakeholders, including the chemical industry, think tanks, civil society, and non-governmental organisations, in the work of the OPCW and emphasise the need for their broadest possible, meaningful, and non-discriminatory participation in the Conference of the States Parties.

We encourage the efforts to promote full universality of the Convention, by engaging the four remaining States not Party to the Convention to join, since without truly global participation, the main objective of the Convention cannot be reached.

Mr Chairperson, North Macedonia remains a strong and active supporter of the OPCW and believes that this Review Conference will be able to provide the much-needed strategic direction for the Organisation for the years to come, to deliver on all its objectives and mandate, including the ultimate goal of achieving a world free from chemical weapons.

I would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document of the Fifth Review Conference and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you for your attention.