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ITALY

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC 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,
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, let me congratulate you, H.E. Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast, on your election as the 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). We sincerely hope that your leadership skills will draw a credible path towards a successful outcome of this important meeting.

Italy aligns itself with the Statement delivered by the European Union and commends the work of the Open-Ended Working Group, skilfully led by H.E. Ambassador Lauri Kuusing from Estonia. I also wish to express some considerations in my national capacity.

At a time when the entire disarmament and non-proliferation architecture proves to be strained by manifold and crosscutting challenges, the global norm posed by the Chemical Weapons Convention against the use and development of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, and under any circumstances echoes a universal reminder of our common investment in global security.

The unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which represents a blatant violation of the United Nations Charter, increases international tension at an unprecedented level and heightens the risk of accidents or incidents across the whole chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear (CBRN) spectrum.

The timing of this event is particularly appropriate for the review of priorities as the Organisation nears the achievement of its primary goal - 100% destruction of declared chemical stockpiles. However, chemical weapons continue to pose a serious threat to global security, and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) of the OPCW has recently confirmed the use of such weapons in Syria in 2018. The report highlighted the commendable professionalism, objectivity, impartiality, and independence of the IIT, along with its relevance to contribute to international efforts to end impunity for those responsible of such unlawful acts, which constitutes a violation of international law and a crime against humanity. Once



again, we call upon the Syrian Government to cooperate with the OPCW and comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Likewise, we reiterate our strong concern that the Russian Federation has not still responded to international calls to cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation on the poisoning and attempt to assassinate Mr Alexei Navalny. We are still waiting for answers to the questions that a number of States addressed to the Russian Federation under Article IX of the Convention.

For our Country protecting innocent civilians remains a priority. We deem it paramount to invest in prevention and response mechanisms and to enhance our collective security and resilience while promoting the peaceful uses of chemistry. In this framework, Italy's commitment to supporting the OPCW on a technical, political, and financial level remains staunch and credible.

We are actively involved in several initiatives aimed at combating the re-emergence of use of weapons of mass destruction and providing training in the field of deterrence and prevention against malicious uses of chemicals. Italy contributed to funding the recently established Centre for Chemistry and Technology, in as much as it represents a valuable hub to improve capacity building, research, and development of operational and analytical capabilities. The role that the ChemTech Centre can play is of paramount importance and Italy believes that the Fifth Review Conference should consider every effort to harness the potential of the centre.

We highly value diversity, inclusivity, and gender considerations within the Organisation's bodies. We encourage further efforts towards geographical diversity and pluralism, with special consideration for chemical industry, academia, and non-governmental organisations. Deeply aware of the importance of each stakeholder's significant role, and recalling the guidelines endorsed by the Third Review Conference in 2013, we call for a full involvement of civil society in the work of the Conferences of the States Parties.

Careful consideration of the threat from non-State actors and possible chemical terrorism is of paramount relevance. Italy commends the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and believes that this session of the Review Conference should equip the Organisation with preventive capabilities to strengthen this area by increasing interactions with international and national bodies responsible for counterterrorism and the fight against crime in general. The interest of terrorist groups or non-State actors in chemical weapons is a growing and persistent risk.

Since the use of chemical weapons is a high-consequence transnational threat, monitoring and limiting illegal efforts to develop such weapons is critical for global security. The spread of innovative technology, expertise, and increased know-how represents another major challenge for our countries.

In our view, the Fifth Review Conference needs to harmonise the international efforts and effectively strengthen the global cooperation and assistance for the implementation of the Convention worldwide, moving beyond the existing polarisation among States Parties.

This session of the Review Conference must provide strategic direction to pursue the universality of the Convention with increased energy, urge the remaining non-signatory States

to come on board, while ensuring a full implementation of its provisions by the entire membership.

Mr Chairperson, we stand ready to give renewed momentum to this process and to strengthen our common pledge in global security and prosperity for all.

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

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