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NEW ZEALAND

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR GEORGE TROUP
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairman,

I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Chair of this Eighteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

When the Conference met in this room last year, we could not have predicted just how significant 2013 would be in the history of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

To begin, I want to congratulate the OPCW on the award of the Nobel Peace Prize. This award reflects the contribution this Organisation has made to disarmament since it was established in 1997.

The news in 2013 has not all been positive, however. On 21 August this year, chemical weapons were used against the people of Syria. New Zealand condemns these acts in the strongest possible terms. The use of chemical weapons is clearly against fundamental international norms, and must never happen again.

In this vein, New Zealand recognises the importance of the cooperation between the United States and the Russian Federation shown in reaching agreement on the Geneva Framework, laying the diplomatic foundation for the elimination of Syria's stockpiles and the subsequent decisions taken by the Executive Council and the UN Security Council.

Under this mandate, the OPCW has played a vital role since September in the international effort to eliminate chemical weapons from Syria. This task is an exceptionally important one, and together the OPCW, States Parties, and the UN must do what is necessary to see this historic mission through to successful completion.

We encourage all States Parties, which are in a position to do so, to contribute to this international effort to eliminate chemical weapons from Syria.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognise, on behalf of the New Zealand Government, the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat, alongside their UN colleagues, for their commitment and professionalism as the OPCW has carried out its role in the Joint Mission in Syria. Those personnel from the Secretariat who have served in Syria under difficult and dangerous circumstances are deserving of special praise.



New Zealand fully supports the OPCW playing its role in the elimination of chemical weapons from Syria, as part of our shared mission to make the world free of chemical weapons. To this end I can announce today that New Zealand will contribute USD 500,000 to the Special Trust Fund for the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles.

With the accession of the Syrian Arab Republic and Somalia to the Convention in the past year, the number of States Parties has reached 190. This is a further, welcome, step towards our ultimate objective of universality of the Convention. New Zealand encourages the few remaining states to accede to the Convention without delay.

While the world is most immediately conscious of the Organisation's role in Syria, the OPCW continues its important work around the globe. Among the competing priorities, we must also ensure that sufficient focus is retained on business as usual. We support the OPCW in carrying out its programme of inspection and verification activities over the coming year.

In 2013, under Article X of the Convention, New Zealand contributed to two regional exercises, in Indonesia and Malaysia, on national response to acts of chemical terrorism. Participants from the New Zealand Defence Force shared their expertise, but also learned from participants' countries which have significant chemical industries relative to our own. New Zealand stands ready to participate in further such regional exercises.

As we look ahead, New Zealand would also like to see the OPCW take up the issue of incapacitating agents. These discussions should look to distinguish between riot control agents, as defined by the Convention, and other toxic chemicals.

New Zealand is preparing to take up an elective seat on the Executive Council from May next year, after an eight-year absence. We look forward to taking up this opportunity and playing a full part in the decision-making apparatus of this Organisation, promoting an open and transparent approach to decision-making.

New Zealand will take an independent and fair-minded approach on the Council, and we look forward to working with and on behalf of all States Parties.

Mr Chairman,

I would like to congratulate Ambassador Üzümcü on his re-appointment as Director-General of the OPCW, which will be confirmed during this meeting. The people of New Zealand wish him well.

Finally, New Zealand welcomes the involvement of civil society at this Conference, and we support their involvement in the future of this Organisation.

New Zealand restates its full support for the Convention and for the OPCW as we work towards a world that is genuinely free of all chemical weapons.

We ask that this statement be treated as an official document of this Conference.