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SWITZERLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR URS BREITER
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SWITZERLAND TO THE OPCW AT THE
NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Madam Chairperson,

The Swiss delegation would like to join previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as Chairperson of the Nineteenth Conference of States Parties. You can count on the full support and cooperation of this delegation in the fulfilment of your duties.

Switzerland welcomes the progress made in the destruction of the declared chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic and commends the OPCW and the United Nations for their unremitting efforts and the impressive achievement. It is now important that the Syrian Arab Republic strives to fully comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”). The remaining chemical weapons production facilities need to be destroyed without any further delays and the incompleteness and inconsistencies of the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration need to be clarified once and for all. It is a matter of credibility for both the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW.

Unfortunately, the satisfaction over the progress achieved is severely clouded by the unacceptable fact that chemical weapons are still being used on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, as the conclusions of the second report of the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission clearly indicate. This is a tragic reminder that much work remains to be done and that the international community needs to remain vigilant. Switzerland hopes that the ongoing investigation by the Fact-Finding Mission will shed more light on the use of chlorine in the Syrian Arab Republic. I would like to express once again my country's continued full support for this essential Mission.

Switzerland strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons under any circumstances. It is of utmost importance to prevent any further such crimes and not to allow them to remain unpunished. The use of chemical weapons is a serious violation of international law, and the international community needs to take consistent action to ensure accountability and bring those responsible on all sides of the conflict to justice. In addition, the universal norm against chemical weapons must be upheld and all States that have not yet done so need to accede to the Convention as soon as possible and without preconditions.

The OPCW has proven time and again its indispensable value when it comes to building a world free of chemical weapons. In order to live up to this challenging task and ensure that the use of toxic chemicals for hostile purposes will never re-emerge, the OPCW must be



prepared for the future and provided with the necessary means, resources and workforce. At the same time, the OPCW needs to focus on its core objectives as a chemical disarmament and non-proliferation organisation and a centre of excellence for any chemical weapons related issue.

The projected Education and Outreach activities as well as the Knowledge Management Capability are critical in that regard and come at the right time. Also cooperation and assistance under Article X make a significant contribution to keeping Member States and the OPCW prepared for the future.

Taking things a bit further, the Swiss delegation would like to stress the importance it attaches to the question of the rehiring of inspectors. Indeed, in order to retain the necessary expertise and continue being able to fulfil its mandate where- and whenever required, the OPCW must be in a position to rely on the particular and irreplaceable expertise of a sufficient number of highly trained and experienced individuals. This requires a degree of flexibility that the proposed decision guarantees. It cannot be that the required experience is wasted for reasons not coherent with the tasks of the Organisation.

The future relevance and credibility of the Convention as a disarmament and non-proliferation instrument also depends heavily on its ability to cope with the rapid advances in science and technology. Switzerland highly appreciates the valuable work of the Scientific Advisory Board in this regard, a body that we will continue to support.

The convergence of biology, chemistry and other sciences is one ground-breaking development in science and technology that poses significant challenges to both the BWC and the Convention. In early October, Switzerland convened a first workshop in a series of events on the issue, entitled "Spiez Convergence". The event brought together scientists and policymakers to discuss benefits and concerns associated with convergence and allowed for the much needed closer interaction between the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and Convention communities. This fruitful exchange constituted an important first step, but there is certainly a need to take this forward. We will report on the event and its outcomes in more detail today at a side event, starting at 13:15 in the Ooms Room, to which all delegations are cordially invited.

Furthermore, Madam Chairperson, as the Swiss Delegation has made it very clear over the past years and in particular during the Third Review Conference in 2013, we fear that the use of toxic chemicals for law enforcement purposes other than riot control agents risks eroding the international norm against chemical weapons and this very Convention. Let me assure you that my country will continue to work towards initiating a comprehensive and focused debate on incapacitating chemical agents for law enforcement purposes, and their possible status under the Convention, with the aim of demonstrating more transparency and confidence among States Parties.

In this regard, I thank the delegation of Australia for their latest contribution to this important debate in the form of a national paper on the weaponisation of central nervous system acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes. We also very much welcome the fact that, as of today, 14 States Parties have publicly stated their national positions concerning the use of toxic chemicals for law enforcement purposes other than riot control agents; this is a notable and substantial progress since the Third Review Conference. We call upon all States Parties that have not yet done so to make their views on this important issue officially known.

To conclude, Madam Chairperson, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this Conference.

Thank you.

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