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**LIBYA**

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF LIBYA AT THE  
TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,  
Mr Director-General,  
Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Members of Delegations,

At the outset, I should like, on behalf of my delegation and myself, to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the States Parties. I also wish to congratulate the elected members of the Bureau for this session. I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express our highest appreciation to the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of the Chemical Weapons, Mr Ahmet Üzümcü, and all the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their efforts to achieve the objectives of the Convention, which we all desire to achieve. I also have the pleasure of extending my thanks to H.E. Ambassador Eduardo Ibarrola-Nicolín for having successfully chaired the last session of the Conference.

The Libyan chemical weapons dossier is a complex issue that has been the focus of attention and a source of deep concern, at the national and even at the regional and international levels. This issue has been posing a looming threat to public safety all over Libya, and to Libya's environment, for many years. This dossier has now been tackled successfully. It has now reached its final stage and is well on track to being closed safely.

Allow me, Mr Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen, to present a quick review of the key phases of this dossier:

- Libya was one of the States that have decided to dispose of its entire chemical arsenal. Libya acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2004, declaring a stockpile of some 24 tonnes of mustard gas, and hundreds of tonnes of chemical precursors used for the production of chemical weapons. Hence, Libya had an obligation, under the provisions of the Convention, to destroy its entire declared stockpile.
- In October 2010, the first activities for the disposal of sulfur mustard were launched. However, the activities came quickly to a halt due to a technical failure in the disposal system and the outbreak of the popular uprising in February 2011.
- Activities related to the Libyan chemical dossier resumed in 2012. At the same time, there was a new development, namely the discovery of mustard-filled chemical munitions that



had not been included in the initial declarations submitted to the OPCW. This added further to the complexity of the Libyan chemical dossier.

- Libya has set a road map for the disposal of its entire chemical stockpile. The road map has led to the development of Libya's relevant national plan, including destruction priorities, the mechanism for the implementation of destruction activities and a specified timeframe for their completion, aimed at disposing of the entire stockpile of chemical weapons as early as possible, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, while giving the highest priority to the destruction of Category 1 chemicals, owing to their dangerous nature. Also, work needed to be accomplished in compliance with national regulations, using the most suitable technologies, and with due regard to environmental protection and public safety standards.
  - By May 2013, Libya had completed the destruction of the bulk sulfur mustard stockpile stored in mobile containers, using hydrolysis along with chemical neutralisation. The destruction was fully completed and verified as such by OPCW inspectors.
  - In the beginning of 2014, Libya had achieved significant success, namely the destruction of mustard-filled chemical munitions and bombs, using thermal detonation technology, with logistical support and technical assistance provided by States Parties to the Convention, namely Canada, Germany, and the United States of America. Subsequently, it was declared officially in Libya and internationally that Libyan territory was now totally free of chemical weapons in any usable form. The OPCW confirmed this in May 2014.
- No sooner had Libya completed the destruction of its Category 1 chemical weapons than it started to focus on the issue of precursors, which are Category 2 chemicals according to the Schedules of the Convention. These precursors are, indeed, dual-use chemicals and are required to be destroyed since they are used in connection with the production of some categories of chemical weapons.
- Libya has been able to achieve important milestones in the disposal of certain types of chemical precursors. However, circumstances surrounding the programme for the destruction of the remaining chemical stockpile, such as the lack of suitable technology for the destruction of remaining chemicals, the threat posed by these chemicals to public safety and the environment, as well as the extraordinary security situation still prevailing in Libya, have been looming large over the implementation of the disposal programme and have presented tough challenges hindering further progress in the programme, and preventing its completion within the specified deadline.
- Committed to taking precautionary measures in order to avoid any undesirable consequences that would jeopardise the security and physical integrity of the stockpile, especially should the latter come to fall, whole or in part, into the hands of outlaw groups or non-State actors, which would pose a threat to domestic and regional safety and security, and since it was of paramount importance that proactive measures be taken in an expeditious manner to prevent such potential consequences, Libyan authorities, on 16 July 2016, took the decision to transfer the chemical precursors from the central region to the north of the country. This represented a bold step, fraught with multiple challenges and hazards.
- In the meanwhile, Libya resorted to requesting the assistance of the international community, through the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

- The response has been positive, through a series of decisions by the Executive Council of the OPCW and a resolution by the United Nations Security Council calling for a joint international partnership to provide Libya with support and logistical and technical assistance for the disposal of the remaining chemical precursors. To that end, the resolution authorised the transfer of the remaining stockpile and its removal by sea outside Libyan territory, for disposal in accordance with international standards for the destruction of chemical waste and in keeping with the verification measures provided for under the Convention, and in the presence of official Libyan observers.
- Against this backdrop, on 27 August 2016, some 500 tonnes of chemical precursors were loaded and removed from Libyan territory in accordance with the plan. On 6 September, the chemical precursors arrived at the port of Bremen, Germany, on board the designated Danish ship. The precursors were then transported to the disposal facility in the city of Munster, in the presence of OPCW inspectors and Libyan observers.

We will later provide you with information on the progress achieved towards the completion of destruction of these precursors, in our annual report to this session.

Mr Chairperson,

Factors which, in my opinion, have been key for the successful removal of precursors can be summarised as follows:

1. Taking the initiative: Libya sounded the alarm when, at the end of last year, an extremist group staged an attack against a security checkpoint, a few dozen kilometres from the storage site. This was followed by another attack, in May 2016, just a few kilometres away. Libya immediately sounded the alarm and, in all transparency, brought the threats looming over the stockpile to the attention of the States Parties to the Convention and the OPCW.
2. The proactive measures taken by Libya, namely the transferring of the stockpile to the north of the country, securing it, and then requesting international assistance.
3. The rapid response by the OPCW and some States Parties to Libya's request for assistance in the disposal of the remaining chemical weapons, given the extraordinary circumstances in the country, with a view to achieving one of the most important objectives of the Convention, i.e. non-proliferation.
4. The ownership of the project: most of the stages of the work have been completed in line with what Libya envisaged to be the best, safest, and least costly option.
5. The international partnership: this important work has been accomplished with the material, logistical, and technical support and assistance provided by some States Parties to the Convention, and the close coordination and direct supervision by the OPCW within the framework of the Convention.

Further, the success of this operation provides us with an example of the effective role that can be undertaken by our Organisation in addressing the threat of non-State actors.

On this occasion, I wish to express anew our highest appreciation and profound gratitude to the States Parties that have participated in this operation, namely Canada, Denmark, Finland,

France, Germany, Italy, Malta, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

On this day, I should like also to express our highest appreciation to the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and to the Director-General. We also value the competence that the entire staff of the Secretariat has demonstrated and their good cooperation during the various phases of the operations.

It can be considered that this complex removal operation is the crowning achievement of the overall programme for the disposal of the Libyan chemical stockpile, which paves the way for the first steps towards the final closure of this dossier. Over the last five years, we have been working resolutely and with determination to complete our work within the programme, one step and phase at a time. We have done our utmost, working in silence and keeping a low profile to the extent possible, under extraordinary security circumstances and facing challenges, and with the available material and technical capabilities, and even adapting, at times, to extreme weather conditions. Therefore, we must express our appreciation and gratitude to all the engineers and technicians, as well as all Libyan personnel, who have taken it upon themselves to direct these efforts, despite the extremely difficult circumstances.

Finally, Mr Chairperson, I thank you, and all those present, for your good attention, and request that this statement be considered as an official document of the Conference.