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MALAYSIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR FAUZIAH MOHAMAD TAIB
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE SEVENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,
Director-General
Distinguished delegates,

A bird sings because it has a song. However, after mid-May this year, the voices of the southeast Asian State Parties, representing over 610 million people, will no longer be heard at the Executive Council, as it will no longer have a representative sitting in the Asian Group.

We are not sure when our voices will be heard again as the scramble for the allocated seats continues among the Asian State Parties. Asia has nine seats, which according to the Convention, shall be in accordance with the principle of rotation. And so we have chosen those with a significant national chemical industry, or States Parties that have something to say and therefore to contribute in the meetings of the Executive Council.

This is an unfortunate situation that faces the Asian States Parties. Unfortunate, because we face more inspections than any other region, yet only a handful of us can participate fully in this “Exclusive Club”. Article VIII, Paragraph 23 of the Convention lays down the number of representatives for each region. What it did not take into account was the number of States Parties of each region.

It is on this premise that my delegation begs the Executive Council to ponder why, despite becoming an almost universal body, amongst us, the voices in the Executive Council are not universal after all.

The principle of justice tells us that the matter is simple—more members means more representatives. This is the principle of equitable representation. I believe the time has come for us to revisit Paragraph 23 so that we do not subvert the course of justice and equity.

“Revisiting” in this sense merely means to establish a dialogue about the matter. The outcome is yet uncertain. But, if we don’t talk then we will never know and I believe, Madam Chair, that everyone, large or small, many or one, has the right to be heard.

My delegation would like to congratulate the Technical Secretariat, and in particular the Verification Division and those tasked with the policy and strategy direction of this Organisation, for their resilience in always finding new and efficient ways to improve their



working methods vis-à-vis Article VI issues of the Convention. Having worked with them on the issue of site-selection methodology of the OCPFs for more than a year, and seeing the results, my delegation can assure US Ambassador, Dr Robert Mikulak, the facilitator for the chemical industries issues, that he is in good company.

Unfortunately, the success of the verification regime remains in the hands of States Parties. Without proper and honest declarations, some information that is crucial on the uses and abuses of chemical products might slip away from our knowledge.

My delegation looks forward to working with Ambassador Nassima Baghli, the Chair of the Open-Ended Working Group, to ensure the success of the Third Review Conference. Despite the early preparation, some now realise that the negotiating process will be a long and arduous one. If it is of any consolation, allow me to quote from “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button”: We are all going the same way; we are just taking different roads to get there.

Despite our anticipated difficulties, my delegation is hopeful that our work on this important review document will not go unrewarded and that at the end of the day, we will be able to come up with a readable, comprehensive blue print that will take this Organisation to its future.

The Chemical Weapon Convention is not cast in stone. Although, most parts of the Convention are future-proof, it still allows for amendments, so long as State Parties feel that change is necessary.

The Scientific Advisory Board is recognised by the Convention and its task is to review scientific and technological developments that could affect the operation of the Convention and to render specialised advice in areas of science and technology relevant to the Convention, to the Conference, the Executive Council or the States Parties. Through it, many experts from all regions have given their independent and expert opinions about new developments in chemistry and biology. Their new findings have expanded the perimeters of our knowledge and compel us to look epistemologically with an open mind. Now, Madam Chairperson, what good is this Organisation if we are reluctant to discuss a matter that involves the very subject we are dealing with?

Related to this, my delegation is open to a better and wider interaction between the OPCW and chemical industries, as well as with the many non-governmental organisations, think tanks and academicians that have interest in the works we are doing. Knowledge shared is knowledge gained, and the more we know and understand, the better we become, and for our purpose, the safer we should feel in our common goal to live in a world free of chemical weapons.

And finally, Madam Chair, as the new year begins, I am obliged to inform the Executive Council of the programmes my National Authority has set for its national inspectors and government officials for the year. These include a workshop on annual declarations and international inspections under Article VI of the Convention; a CBRN awareness programme; a seminar on Article VI on chemical industries; a seminar on Article VI for importers and exporters, and a series of pre-national inspectors meetings. These activities have become more relevant as Malaysia’s chemical sector continues to grow from year to year.

Thank you, Madam Chair. May I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session of the Executive Council.