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**RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT THE SEVENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Distinguished Chairperson,

The delegation of the Russian Federation is pleased to again welcome you as head of the Executive Council and would like to express its confidence that under your able guidance, the work of the Seventy-Seventh Session—the agenda for which is fuller than ever—will be efficient and productive.

In this regard, you may count on the full support of the Russian delegation, its constructive mindset, and its willingness to cooperate.

In line with the decision of the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of States Parties, the Russian Federation is taking all necessary measures to complete the destruction of the remaining chemical weapons “in the shortest time possible”. Since the Seventy-Sixth Session of the Council, Russia has destroyed 816 tonnes of Schedule 1 chemical weapons. To date, Russia has destroyed a total of 33,314 tonnes of Schedule 1 chemical weapons, or 83.4% of its initially declared quantity.

With a conscientious attitude toward its obligations and guided by a spirit of cooperation and openness, Russia provides detailed reports to the Council’s Member States not only about the problems impacting the national chemical weapons destruction programme, but also about the technical, organisational, administrative, and financial measures it is taking to overcome these difficulties. In accordance with the understanding recorded at the Seventy-Sixth Session of the Council, our party submitted a national document: an addendum to its detailed plan for destruction. We are prepared to shed light in detail on the current destruction status for the Russian Federation’s remaining chemical weapons stockpile, including the question as to the prospects for the soonest possible completion of this process, within the framework of the discussion under sub-item 6(b) of the session’s agenda.

The Russian Federation took note of the most recent report by the Director-General on the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, as well as the latest monthly report by the Syrian Arab Republic.

As you know, at its previous session the Council stated that there had been significant progress achieved in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme and noted the very important fact of the completed elimination, by the deadline envisaged in Council’s



decision dated 27 September 2013 and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118, of all declared chemical weapons material and equipment from the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, despite uniquely challenging conditions.

Today, this progress has become even more obvious: not only were all of the declared chemicals removed from the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, but they were also almost completely destroyed. Preparations for the destruction of the 12 former chemical weapons production facilities remaining in the Syrian Arab Republic are moving full steam ahead, as Director-General Mr Üzümcü reported today. We hope that soon all of the technical elements related to the implementation of the Council's Decision dated 24 July 2014 will be put into place and the action destruction operations of the 12 Syrian CWPFs will begin. In this regard, we welcome the Director-General's intent to hold a special Technical Secretariat briefing on this matter on 9 October.

In this regard, we would like to note the following: the delays from the very start of the destruction process for the 12 Syrian CWPFs do not have any political undertones whatsoever. As far as we know, the problems that have not yet been resolved are purely financial and organisational in nature, resulting from the legitimate interests of each of the parties involved in the process. As far as a political component is concerned, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, as we can see, is demonstrating its political will and practical readiness to begin destruction without delay.

We are also closely watching the work of the OPCW's mission to clarify the initial declarations made by the Syrian Arab Republic upon its accession to the Convention in line with Article III. We firmly believe that the mission's main task is to strengthen trust in the Syrian Arab Republic as a conscientious, responsible party to the Convention. At the same time, however, the calls for the Syrian Arab Republic to clarify various aspects of its chemical programme should not reach beyond the Convention's requirements. In this regard, we welcome the fact that the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic are demonstrating due openness and working closely with the mission to clarify all aspects of its chemical programme.

Unfortunately, we have not yet had the opportunity to examine in detail the report circulated by the Secretariat on 3 October on this matter, but we nonetheless noted that many specific issues that had previously been raised by the mission had already been clarified. It appears to us that these are clearly substantial, positive moves in the right direction and we await with interest the Secretariat's special briefing during this session.

In assessing the overall progress achieved surrounding Syria, we would like to again emphasise that the general course of the Syrian operation proves that when the Council acts constructively and pragmatically—without politicising anything—it is capable of resolving issues of any complexity and magnitude.

The same concerns the overall nature of the Council's activities surrounding Syria. In spite of the fact that these activities began under extraordinary circumstances resulting from the need to eliminate Syria's military chemical potential as soon as possible, right now, when all of the requisite objective political assessments by the Council have already been given, they must transition to the stage of regular technical work. To continue with the same urgency in its motives would only be detrimental.

The Russian delegation has carefully examined the draft decision presented by the Secretariat on the retention of samples of Syrian chemical weapons and the Note on this matter. We believe that this is a particularly difficult issue affecting political, legal, and technical aspects of the Convention's implementation.

Given these circumstances, we would recommend postponing the consideration of this matter as it requires more thorough development.

Our delegation does not consider it advisable to resume the discussion on the Fact-Finding Mission's second report on the alleged use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, since a large-scale discussion of this very issue was held last week at the Council's special session, at which 47 delegations spoke.

This is why we are limiting ourselves to highlighting the fundamental elements of our position:

- the Russian Federation decisively and unconditionally condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone;
- we support the intent of the Director-General of the OPCW Technical Secretariat to have the Mission continue its work in order to comprehensively examine all of the materials pertaining to incidents in which chlorine was used in the Syrian Arab Republic;
- we firmly believe that it would be wrong to draw any conclusions—particularly political conclusions—before the Mission has completed its work, published its final report, and before it has been discussed by the OPCW's policy-making organs.

Unfortunately, as the events of the last few weeks have shown, the problem of the use of chemical substances as chemical weapons is becoming an increasingly serious matter. We are now talking not only about the Syrian Arab Republic since the emergence of numerous reports on the use of chlorine by the "Islamic State" terrorist group in Iraq. In September alone, as far as we know, there were at least four incidents of fighter attacks involving chlorine on 15, 16, 22 and 29 September. Shells were discovered in Iraq containing chlorine, as were tanks containing the same substance and rigged with explosives. We also know that the IS fighters are attempting to produce improvised agents and chemical munitions. Moreover, reports have emerged that the fighters are in possession of airplanes and helicopters with which they intend to carry out large-scale terrorist attacks involving large quantities of chlorine.

We can't help but note that all of these incidents involve the use of one and the same substance—chlorine—as a chemical weapon by the very same people: fighters engaged in terrorist activities in the territories of the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq.

Incidents involving the use of chlorine in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the situation in Libya, about which we will say more later, underline the seriousness of the danger of producing, acquiring, and using chemical weapons by non-State actors, including terrorists.

This was thoroughly addressed in the report of the Third Review Conference. In turn, United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 stipulates that all States shall refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer, or use chemical weapons and their means of delivery, and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 calls for all States Parties to inform immediately the Security Council of any such cases.

We have taken note of the information from Iraq submitted to the OPCW in response to the Director-General's communication about the efforts made by the government of said State to clarify the circumstances of one of the incidents. We also expect that the OPCW will receive exhaustive information about all of the instances of chlorine use in Iraq.

Additionally, like a number of other delegations, we firmly believe that the developments in Iraq should be under the Council's close attention; the Council, in full compliance with its mandate, is obliged to take steps to ensure the implementation of the Convention, including the key provision of excluding completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons.

We noted that in his opening statement for this session, the Director-General, while addressing the status of chemical weapons destruction in possessor States, pointed out that Libya is considering a variety of possibilities for the destruction of its remaining Schedule 2 chemical weapons stockpile, and that consultations are being held on this matter in connection with the country's security situation.

In this regard, we would like to draw the Council's attention to the statement made by Mr Lavrov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, at the Sixty-Ninth Session of the United Nations General Assembly in which he noted, among other things, that: "...we would like to obtain ... information on the condition of chemical arsenals in Libya. ... the problem ... is too serious to turn a blind eye on it."

Regarding the rehiring of inspectors, Russia is basing its position on the OPCW's fundamental principle in staff management, namely that the OPCW is a "non-career" organisation, for which purpose a tenure policy was adopted. While recognising the importance of retaining the OPCW Inspectorate's human resources, we believe that at this stage, there are no convincing arguments in favour of changing this fundamental principle. In this regard, we have serious concerns about the decision to rehire inspectors. We are willing to discuss this matter in detail during the consideration of agenda sub-item 8(m).

The delegation of the Russian Federation has carefully examined the draft 2015 Budget prepared by the Secretariat and believes it can be recommended for adoption at the Nineteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

We welcome the efforts being made to use the minimum necessary expense levels when determining budgetary needs in order to utilise the resources provided to the Organisation by the States Parties as efficiently as possible. In this regard, we note with satisfaction the fact that the proposed draft Budget provides for a return to the parameters that were in place prior to the Organisation's increased expenditures in 2014 in connection with the needs for the operation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Seventy-Seventh Session of the Executive Council.

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