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GERMANY

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR DR CHRISTOPH ISRANG
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GERMANY TO THE OPCW AT THE
SEVENTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman, Mr Director-General, distinguished colleagues,

Thank you very much for giving me the floor. Germany fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union delivered by Ambassador Māris Klišāns.

This year we remember the first large-scale use of chemical weapons 100 years ago in the battle fields of Ieper. The commemorative event we will attend in April reminds us of the evil of chemical warfare – and our obligation to ban this evil once and for all. Germany is fully aware of its role in history. This is also why my delegation has contributed to the exhibition on chemical weapons in World War I organised by the Technical Secretariat. This awareness is not limited to the German Government, it is also shared by the German civil society. For that reason, the President of the German Chemical Society will be part of the German delegation at the commemoration in Ieper.

In the past months, we have made important steps to reach universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention. At the same time, we invite the few remaining states outside the Convention to join the efforts of the OPCW family to free the world of chemical weapons once and for all.

My delegation welcomes the most recent initiatives to discuss the future of this Organisation. We consider it timely as well as appropriate to look beyond the end of the destruction phase. We agree that one of the key objectives of this Organisation will be to prevent the reemergence of chemical weapons. In that respect, it is crucial for the Organisation to maintain a highly qualified and motivated workforce. This is of particular importance in order to secure a high level of verification capabilities.

When discussing the future of this Organisation, I would like to add two topics that should be given appropriate attention: terrorism on the one hand and incapacitating chemical agents (ICAs) on the other.

At the same time, we cannot ignore, however, that the task of ending all “traditional” state owned chemical weapons programmes has not yet been completed. In this context, we are looking forward to steady progress in their elimination.



Turning to a subject of utmost concern: It is highly disturbing that we are still faced with the actual use of chemical weapons. This Council had to take note of the repeated and systematic use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in Syria. Although some progress has been achieved in the destruction of the declared Syrian chemical weapons programme, the danger it poses to citizens of Syria and the international community is unfortunately not yet eliminated.

Once again, we call on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to meet its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, the decisions of this Council and United Nations Security Council resolutions 2118 (2013) and 2209 (2015).

The latest report of the Declaration Assessment Team shows again that major concerns, discrepancies and inconsistencies remain. Before all these issues have not been satisfactorily addressed, we will not be able to accept that this Council's task on the Syrian chemical weapons programme is complete, nor that we can have sufficient confidence that Syria is in full compliance with its obligations.

It is obvious that the DAT needs to continue its work just as the Fact-Finding Mission. The numerous allegations regarding the use of toxic chemicals as a weapon—some of them are as recent as yesterday evening—that have not yet been investigated require further attention by the FFM. This also holds true for allegations made by the Syrian authorities regarding chemical weapons use against its forces. In this context, I cannot but express our surprise that Syrian authorities are so slow in responding to questions posed by the Technical Secretariat and so hesitant when it comes to requests by the Technical Secretariat to further investigate these allegations.

Germany reiterates its firm position that Syria has to fulfill its obligations under the Convention which of course includes payment of verification costs arising in connection with the destruction of its chemical weapons programme. We expect from Syria, just as from any other member of this Organisation, to take the necessary decisions in this respect.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Director-General and all of the OPCW staff for their tremendous efforts to verify and end the Syrian chemical weapons programme. The Technical Secretariat staff deserves our highest appreciation for its professional work in difficult, often dangerous circumstances.

Germany was happy to provide security training to more than 45 OPCW inspectors at the United Nations Training Center of the German Armed Forces in Hammelburg in February 2015. Germany is ready to repeat this in the future.

In closing, I would like to request this statement to be circulated as an official document of this session of the Executive Council.

I thank you, Mr Chairman.

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