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JAPAN

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MASARU TSUJI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF JAPAN TO THE OPCW
AT THE SEVENTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

Let me start by showing our view on where we stand now in terms of the way to achieve the goal of the Convention.

On 28 May, the Director-General announced that 90% of the declared chemical weapons had been verified by the Organisation as destroyed. This is another sign of steady progress. We welcome this progress and appreciate the efforts by the States Parties concerned. For fulfilling the obligations, it is important to further advance the destruction of all chemical weapons, including ACWs.

Having seen the progress just mentioned, we would like to express our appreciation of the initiative by the Director-General to launch the discussion on the future vision of the role and function of the Organisation.

In the current international security environment, threats of use of chemical weapons by non-State actors are becoming imminent. Preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons is of vital importance as one of key objectives of the Organisation. The time when full destruction of the stockpile of chemical weapons will be accomplished, the important role of the Organisation remains unchanged. Japan will continue to cooperate with the Member States, the Director-General, and the Technical Secretariat for enhancing the function of the Organisation.

On education and outreach, engaging education and outreach activities should be an important part of the effort of the Organisation for ensuring compliance with the Convention, especially in light of preventing re-emergence of chemical weapons. And, it requires broad cooperation of a variety of actors in the international community.

On the important function of education and outreach, we particularly attach great importance to promoting national implementation, as one of the most fundamental and crucial steps in enhancing the full implementation of the Convention.



Concerning the idea of the establishment of an Advisory Board on Education and Outreach, we believe it necessary to carefully consider how we could establish an efficient and effective framework for achieving the core objective of the Convention within the limited resources, while avoiding potential duplication with other Organisation functions.

Let me turn to the issues related to the chemical weapons of the Syrian Arab Republic.

We saw the progress to date with regard to the destruction of chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities of the Syrian Arab Republic. We call for further efforts by the related parties, especially the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, for complete destruction of those chemical weapons and facilities at the earliest possible date.

Regarding the question of the initial declaration by the Syrian Arab Republic, we highly appreciate the Declaration Assessment Team for playing its crucial and challenging role, and express our strong support for its activities. We are deeply concerned, however, that many issues of the initial declaration remain unsolved. We would like to urge the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to double its efforts to sincerely fulfil obligations of the Convention and to fully cooperate with the Declaration Assessment Team.

Regarding the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, it was a step forward that the mission was finally dispatched to the Syrian Arab Republic at the end of May to investigate information submitted by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic last December. With regard to the recent allegations, all available information is being gathered and examined by experts of the Technical Secretariat. Japan reiterates its support for the continuation of the work undertaken.

At the same time, we are deeply concerned about new reports submitted by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic before this session, showing that toxic chemicals have been continuously used since 2013. The Government of Japan strongly and categorically condemns such use by any party to the conflict. It is of the highest importance to bring all the facts to light.

On allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, we have seen the FFM function as a useful tool for gathering information. Under the current international security environment, this new initiative by the Director-General provides us with new insights for the future function of the Organisation. For operational purposes, we consider it useful to retain the lessons learned by the Organisation for promptly and effectively responding to a potential similar situation in the future.

Last but not least, let me touch upon an important issue for Japan, the abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs).

The destruction of ACWs is one of the most important commitments of Japan based on the Convention.

In order to ensure the transparency in these important projects, Japan and China, under cooperation of the Secretariat, invited the Chairperson of the Council, the Director-General and the Council delegations from 8 to 12 June 2015 to the Haerbaling ACWs site, the largest burial site of ACWs. In the Haerbaling ACWs site, a test destruction operation started on 1 December 2014. We would like to thank Mr Chairperson, the Director-General, as well as

other distinguished members who participated in the visit, for their cooperation and understanding for our work.

We believe that all participants of the visit, through the first-hand information of the progress of the destruction, could obtain a clearer picture about Japan's serious commitment and the close on-site cooperation between Japan and China. The delegation also witnessed the technical complexity and challenges that these ACWs projects entail.

My delegation listened carefully to the statement by the Ambassador of China. I would like to stress that we should work closely to facilitate the process of destruction of ACWs. It is of the utmost importance for Japan and China to make every effort to overcome technical challenges which could hinder prompt destruction of all ACWs in China. We appreciate the continuous support from the Council and reaffirm our commitment to exert the greatest possible effort for early and complete destruction of ACWs with the adequate cooperation of China.

Lastly, I'd like to welcome three States, namely Myanmar, Angola and South Sudan, who are to complete, as I understand, their respective procedures to join us in the Convention soon.

Before I conclude, we would like to commend our colleagues who will leave The Hague after this session, for their precious contribution. In particular, I would like to thank the Deputy Director-General Mrs Grace Asirwatham, for her hard work and extraordinary contribution as well as for her fairness and sincerity.

Thank you, Mr Chairman, and I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session of the Council.

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