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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT THE
EIGHTIETH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Distinguished Chairperson,

The delegation of the Russian Federation is pleased to again welcome you as the Chairperson of the Executive Council, and would like to voice its confidence that under your leadership the work of the Eightieth Session, with its full agenda, will be effective and productive. In this regard, you may count on the full support of the Russian delegation, its constructive stance, and its readiness to cooperate.

First and foremost, we are pleased to inform you of the substantial progress achieved by the Russian Federation in the destruction of its stockpiles of chemical weapons: all four Russian facilities that were scheduled to be closed by 31 December this year have already—much earlier than the stated deadline—completed all chemical weapons destruction work.

Activities are also successfully under way at the last Russian facility in Kizner, which will continue operating after December 2015. This facility has already destroyed 42% of its chemical weapons stockpiles. As at 5 October 2015, Russia has destroyed a total of 36,627 metric tonnes of Category 1 chemical weapons, or 91.6% of the total declared amount.

All of these achievements give us grounds to believe that the Russian Federation will complete the fulfilment of its key obligations under the Convention in the soonest possible time and destroy all of its chemical weapons stockpiles.

We welcome the efforts of other possessor States, such as the United States of America and Libya, to achieve the soonest possible destruction of their stockpiles of chemical weapons while fully understanding the difficult administrative, financial, and technical problems they must tackle. In Libya's case, this also involves responding to security threats. We believe that in this regard, the Organisation must demonstrate various forms of support for the efforts of possessor States in fulfilling their obligations to destroy remaining chemical arsenals.

The Russian delegation assigns great importance to the efforts to achieve universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention and notes the substantial successes that have been accomplished recently toward this end, particularly in light of Myanmar having achieved

* Reissued in English for technical reasons.



status as a new State Party to the Convention and Angola's upcoming completion of procedures to accede to the Convention. In this regard, we strongly urge those countries that have not yet acceded to the Convention to take the necessary measures for their soonest possible accession to this vitally important treaty for international peace and security.

The Russian Federation has noted the latest reports from the Director-General and the Syrian Arab Republic on the status of the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and production facilities, and is pleased to note the due level of cooperation that the Syrian authorities continue to demonstrate with the OPCW's Technical Secretariat.

Unfortunately, it is through no fault of the Syrian Arab Republic that two of the 12 former chemical weapons production facilities remain undestroyed in said country—the reasons behind the delay are absolutely objective, primarily related to the internal armed conflict that has been exacerbated by the sanctions putting pressure on Syria. There is no doubt that the Syrian Arab Republic is doing everything it can under these difficult conditions to fulfil its obligations under the Convention as soon as possible.

We continue to carefully follow the activities of the OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team in the Syrian Arab Republic in line with Article III of the Convention and are grateful to the Secretariat for their productive report on this matter. The report states that in spite of the large scope of work that has been conducted by the DAT in close cooperation with the Syrian Arab Republic, there are still issues requiring further clarification. In this regard, clearly the time has come to consider how to optimise the activities of the DAT, to look into which issues can be closed and for which issues a ranking system can be built to determine priority and relevancy to the object and purpose of the Convention. We are prepared to have a substantive discussion on this matter under the corresponding agenda item.

Like other delegations, we await the release of the next report from the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. At the same time, our position is that the Mission must be provided with the due level of cooperation and exchange of information between the Mission and the Syrian authorities for all Mission events at all stages of its work, including its work in third countries as is required by, specifically, the Council's decision dated 4 February 2015. Only this approach will facilitate the independent and unbiased natures of the Mission activities and uphold trust in the results of its efforts.

The Russian Federation supported the institution of a Joint Investigative Mechanism between the OPCW and the United Nations under United Nations Security Council resolution 2235 (2015) based on the fundamental and unconditional principle of the inadmissibility of the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, at any time. We are convinced that the OPCW—as the only organisation in the world with all of the requisite expert knowledge and abilities in the field of chemical weapons—is destined to play a key role in this mechanism by providing a professional and objective approach, guaranteeing the soundness and accuracy of the findings of the Joint Investigative Mechanism's future reports. We are convinced that the OPCW must be provided with an adequate level of participation in the work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism as stipulated by the mandate of the joint—I want to emphasise that term—mechanism. Otherwise, without the experience and knowledge of the Secretariat's experts, who are recognised, highly qualified specialists in the field of chemical weapons, the Joint Investigative Mechanism will not likely be capable of tackling the ambitious tasks that it faces. Frankly speaking, this is what will determine our reception of the results of the Joint Investigative Mission.

More often now, information is coming in from various sources about the use of toxic chemicals by members of the “Islamic State” (ISIL) and other terrorist organisations—and this includes full-scale military toxic substances, namely mustard, in the territories of Iraq and Syria. We express serious concern that ISIL’s use of chemical weapons for military and terrorist purposes will take on a larger-scale and systemic nature, reaching a different technological level. Furthermore, witnesses have already emerged stating that ISIL members have begun creating bases at territories under their control to develop and produce components of chemical weapons and their means of delivery.

We are convinced that the OPCW cannot afford not to be involved in this matter and must respond adequately to these threats, as demonstrated by the growing number of States Parties. The subject of non-State actors—not only within the context of the threat of the use of chemical weapons, but also within the context of achieving the goals and objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention as a whole—was brought up repeatedly during the unofficial informal ambassadorial retreat that took place on 1 October.

One of the key efforts in this field is being led by the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, which held a regular meeting on 5 October where it was decided to create a specialised subgroup on the legal aspects associated with the threat of the use of chemical weapons. We welcome the assignment of Her Excellency María Teresa Infante, the distinguished Ambassador of Chile, as chairperson of this subgroup, and we express our hope that under her qualified guidance, the experts of the States Parties will be able to develop useful ideas and recommendations concerning the role of the OPCW in preventing and counteracting chemical terrorism.

We have noted the statement by Director-General of the Secretariat Mr Üzümcü that the Organisation is in contact with the Government of Iraq regarding the use of chemical weapons by members of ISIL on the territory of said country, and we welcome steps taken by the Iraqi Government to investigate these incidents and its good faith in contacting the Organisation for assistance and cooperation in line with Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We are seriously concerned about the known situation concerning the disclosure of confidential information about the chemical demilitarisation of the Syrian Arab Republic by former employees of the Secretariat.

We have noted the Director-General’s notification on the start of a full-scale investigation into this incident. As we await the results, we would like to address the following. Unfortunately, this is not the first incident of its kind, and it points to the need to take urgent measures to improve the system of handling information at the OPCW, as the leak of sensitive information could impact the level of cooperation between the States Parties and the Secretariat when it comes to submitting protected data to the OPCW.

The delegation of the Russian Federation, having noted the results of the informal consultation on the OPCW’s draft 2016 programme and budget, supports the recommendation that the Twentieth Session of the Conference of the States Parties adopt this document. We are pleased to note the fact that for the second year in a row, the proposed draft budget provides for a return to the parameters that were in place prior to the increase in the Organisation’s expenditures in 2014 due to the needs associated with the operations in the Syrian Arab Republic. At the same time, we would like to voice some concern about the fact

that for the first time in a long time, the OPCW's administrative management expenditures in the budget exceed operational expenses. While understanding that there are objective reasons for this, such as the sharp drop in the number of Inspectorate staff members in particular—due to the closure of four out of five Russian chemical weapons destruction facilities—we would welcome efforts to rein in any growth in the Secretariat's administrative expenses.

We welcome the consensus achieved on the institution of an Advisory Board for Education and Outreach. We believe that the agreed upon principle for forming this new body is of fundamental importance, i.e., offering extensive opportunities for all States Parties to assign representatives as delegates on the Board. We believe that this approach will allow the Advisory Board to work as effectively as possible, as it will be possible to take full account of all of the interests of the States on the receiving end of the recommendations issued by the Board.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

We kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Eightieth Session of the Executive Council.

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