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NETHERLANDS

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JAN-LUCAS VAN HOORN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NETHERLANDS TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTIETH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

Let me begin by welcoming the Deputy Director-General, H.E. Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao, as this is the first session of the Council he is attending since assuming his duties. We wish him every success in his new position and look forward to our co-operation. An equally warm welcome we extend to the Union of Myanmar and to Angola as the latest members of the Chemical Weapons Convention family. Their joining the Chemical Weapons Convention is an illustration of the vitality of our Convention. My delegation expresses the hope that we shall be able to welcome South Sudan as the 193rd Party to the Convention in the very near future, as the next step towards truly universal membership.

The Netherlands associates itself with the statement pronounced by the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

My delegation thanks the Director-General for his opening statement and the Vice-Chairpersons for their reports.

For more than two years now, this Council has been forced to spend much of its time and attention to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, and the end is not in sight. We restate our deep admiration and respect for the manner in which the members of the Declaration Assessment Team perform their duties.

The report of the DAT about its work in the period from April 2014 to September 2015 shows that many –too many– of the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the initial declaration remain, even after the numerous amendments and additions thereto. Among the issues that require clarification, the questions surrounding the role of the Syrian Scientific Research Centre (SSRC) in the chemical weapons programme stand out, to name but one. Full disclosure on this and other issues must be given. We repeat our call on the Syrian authorities to submit the long overdue Historical Overview Document without any further delay and recall that it is incumbent upon them to convince the members of this Council that each and every element of their chemical weapons programme has been declared and dismantled completely and irreversibly.

Like other members of the Council, the Netherlands has repeatedly voiced its grave concern about the continued use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. In this regard we



have expressed our support for the work of the Fact-Finding Mission and we continue to do so. We look forward to the Director-General's update on the FFM's activities and particularly await the full report of teams Alfa and Bravo, including the results of the analysis of the evidence collected.

Finally, we welcome and support the adoption by the United Nations Security Council of its resolution 2235 (2015), establishing a Joint Investigative Mechanism to identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. We see this as a crucial step towards full accountability for these heinous crimes and expect the JIM to commence its operations in the shortest possible time.

We congratulate our former colleague ambassador Eberhard Schanze of Germany on his appointment as member of the independent three-member panel that will lead the JIM.

Traditionally, the autumn session of the Council discusses the budget of the Organisation. We express our appreciation to the facilitator for Programme and Budget, Mr Antti Vaaras of Finland and to the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their untiring efforts to bring the consultations to a successful conclusion before the start of this session of the Executive Council. We look forward to a smooth continuation of the process and adoption by consensus at the Conference of the State Parties.

In light of the experiences with the investigations in the Syrian Arab Republic and the bill this draws on the Organisation's resources, my delegation supports the establishment of a special fund for contingency operations, to increase the flexibility needed to respond quickly and decisively to unforeseen situations.

At the Seventy-Ninth Session of the Executive Council, in July, the Netherlands joined other delegations in requesting a briefing by the Director-General on the OPCW's actual financial situation at this session. The Note on the cash situation (EC-80/DG.18 C-20/DG.14, dated 15 September 2015) shows that the arrears in assessed contributions, as well as the outstanding amounts for reimbursement of verification costs under Articles IV and V, are of an unsustainable level.

We stress that these payments are treaty obligations and we call on the States Parties concerned to pay their dues in full and as soon as possible.

Finally, I express the Netherlands' full support for the establishment of an Advisory Board on Education and Outreach. On previous occasions, my delegation has welcomed the activities undertaken by the Secretariat to improve relationships and cooperation with external stakeholders and we are convinced that further initiatives are required to maintain and strengthen the role of the Organisation as a pivotal player in the field of chemical weapons knowledge and the prevention of re-emergence of chemical weapons, as well as the peaceful uses of chemistry.

In closing, I request that this statement be issued as an official document of this Eightieth Session of the Executive Council and be published on the OPCW website and extranet.

Thank you.