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IRAN

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR DR ALIREZA JAHANGIRI PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN TO THE OPCW AT THE EIGHTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I am pleased to once again congratulate you, Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed BELAL, on assuming the chairmanship of the Executive Council and express our confidence in your able leadership to bring our work to a successful ending.

I would like to express our appreciation to the Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, for his comprehensive statement and commend him and the Technical Secretariat for the work done regarding the implementation of the Convention and promoting our common goal of a world free of the chemical weapons.

My delegation would also like to associate itself with the statement delivered by Ambassador Madam Haifa Aissami Madah of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China.

Last week, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the victims of the use of chemical weapons in Sardasht, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Director-General of the OPCW, as an annual practice, separately issued a statement in which the use of chemical weapons was denounced and the victims of those inhuman attacks were commemorated.

Furthermore, the Director-General paid a successful visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran during which he had a number of in-depth exchanges of views on many major issues with high-level officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran and visited the Tehran Peace Museum, where he had a chance to meet some of victims of chemical weapons. The Director-General's visit to Iran continued with a speech at the Institute of Political and International Studies (IPIS), the research and education arm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.



The Sixth Regional Training Course on Assistance and Protection against Chemical Weapons for Asian States Parties was successfully held in Tehran from 28 June to 2 July and attended by 24 participants from 15 States Parties. This course was a great opportunity to share Iran's experiences with the participants and show the relevant capabilities. Concurrent with the closure of the course, the National Authority of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the Chemical Weapons Convention held a special event for the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention at which the Director-General and some of the Iranian high-ranking officials, including the Minister of Defence as well as the Deputy Foreign Minister, emphasised the full implementation of the Convention and the need to cope seriously with the terrorist groups' attempts to use chemical weapons.

In addition, we are working with the Technical Secretariat to host the Ninth Course on Medical Treatment of Victims of Chemical Weapons; the courses that are exclusively held in Iran supported by a remarkable advantage of the Iranian experience achieved during the eight-year of imposed war by Saddam against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

For us, all of these activities and events have a common message - chemical weapons and all other types of weapons of mass destructions should be abolished throughout the world and the relevant arsenals ought to be destroyed immediately.

The destruction of all chemical weapons stockpiles is the most important commitment of the States Parties to the Convention and constitutes the top priority for the OPCW. We seriously remain concerned that the major possessor States have not complied with the deadline set out for this obligation of the Convention.

We encourage all possessor States to take all necessary measures to expedite their destruction process.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is one of the most successful international agreements. With 192 States Parties having committed to eliminating chemical weapons and preventing any return to chemical warfare, the Convention has achieved near-universal status.

Now, more than ever, the OPCW and States Parties must push for universalisation, since there can be no justification for remaining outside this Convention. The Islamic Republic of Iran calls again upon those outside of the Convention to accede to it without any further delay and preconditions.

The Islamic Republic of Iran attaches high priority to the provisions of the Convention on international cooperation as one of the important pillars of the Convention and believes that the full implementation of Article XI, namely facilitation of the transfer of peaceful chemical technology, requires consistency of national legislations with the provisions of Article XI and restraining from imposing any export control in contrary with the transfer regime enshrined in the Convention.

I would like to reiterate the importance of holding the workshop on the review and evaluation of the full implementation of the Article XI annually, in order to adopt concrete proposals to be considered by the Review Conference.

My delegation encourages the active participation of all States Parties in the upcoming Review and Evaluation Workshop on the Components of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI in November 2017.

We are also of the view that in prioritising questions for the future of the Organisation, the international cooperation should occupy a salient position.

Nowadays, the international community is facing the strong threat imposed by the usage of chemical weapons by terrorist groups around the world, which is possibly the most significant threat since the establishment of the OPCW and entry into force of the Convention.

During the meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism on Monday, 10 July 2017, it was mentioned that since 2011 more than two hundred thousand foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) have travelled to the areas under the control of the terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq, especially so-called ISIS. The globalised nature of this phenomenon requires united and comprehensive reaction by the international community through taking consistent actions to ensure accountability and bringing the perpetrators and their logistic and financial supporters to justice.

Over the last week, we all witnessed an extraordinary Meeting of the Council (EC-M-55). On 5 July, delegation after delegation, expressed their concern about the update on the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria, which is going to be further considered under same agenda item 6 (g) at this Council.

Regardless of the fact, my delegation is of the view that such an extraordinary Meeting was either discriminatory and double standard against the Syrian Arab Republic, or abuse of the Organisation to achieve some States' political goals.

The Islamic Republic of Iran does believe that the Syrian Arab Republic should be hailed for its successful destruction and removal of the chemical weapon arsenals in a very short period of time and under a very unsecured condition. However, we realised that this fact is ignored, and instead, it is subject to a political pressure for either declarations or alleged use of chemical weapons. We have also observed that the Syrian Arab Republic itself, has called, on several occasions, the Technical Secretariat to dispatch the Fact-Finding Mission to prove use of chemical weapons in Syria. These repeated requests per se is an indication that the Syrian Arab Republic is not involved in use of chemical weapons, let alone its extensive cooperation with the inspection teams and several documents which have been submitted either to the Technical Secretariat or the Fact-Finding Mission.

Unfortunately, the future credibility and relevance of the OPCW and the Convention are at stake. The purposes of the Organisation are to eliminate of all categories of chemical weapons stockpiles and to prevent reemergence of chemical weapons. The Organisation is also empowered to deal with any allegations of use of chemical weapons through a robust verification regime. Regrettably, on 6 April 2017, we witnessed a unilateral attack by one of the Member States of the OPCW against another, under a far-fetched pretext of using chemical weapons. That motion was contrary to the international law and constitutes a violation of international norms.

My delegation would like to emphasise that the unique and exclusive role of the OPCW as the only mechanism to verify any use of chemical weapons is beyond of question. Yet, we have not forgotten that one delegation prevented the adoption of the routine report of the Eighty-Second Session of the Executive Council, solely because the Council could not approve a completely biased draft decision sponsored by that delegation.

I would like to reiterate some points regarding the First Inspections Report at the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Center Facilities in Barzah and Jamrayah by the Director-General (EC-85/DG.16, Dated 2 June 2017). The Syrian Arab Republic has granted full access to all areas requested by the inspection team as well as provided the necessary documents, support and cooperation. In addition, the results of the analysis have proved that there were neither scheduled chemicals present, nor any activities inconsistent with its obligations under the Convention.

All those were clearly reflected in the report and guided us with a blueprint for the common agenda item at the EC-M-55 and EC-85 that the Syrian Arab Republic has fulfilled its commitment and provided significant cooperation. My delegation believes that this is a momentous step forward towards resolving remaining issues regarding the Syrian's dossier.

The appointment of the upcoming Director-General, as well as the future priorities of the OPCW, stand as two important issues for us in the very near future. Like many other delegations, we share the same view about the necessity of transparent, open and fair process of the appointment. However, we believe that the next Director-General should do his best to preserve the spirit of consensus, which has been recently ignored in many cases. Independence of the Organisation is another important principle that along with other issues should be taken into account by the next Director-General.

Furthermore, we believe that to make a fair and equity based decision with regards to the election of the best possible candidate; a set of rules of procedure for this election is indeed an urgent need for the OPCW.

With regard to the future priorities of the OPCW, we are of the view that the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities of the OPCW should conduct its function within the framework of the Convention and its output should be consistent with the Convention without any potential risk of change with respect to the scope of the Convention. We hope that the Working Group continues its mandate in an open and transparent manner.

In closing, may I request that this statement to be circulated as an official document of the Eighty-Fifth Session of the Executive Council and be posted on both the external server and the public website. Thank you.