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SRI LANKA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR A.M.J. SADIQ
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SRI LANKA TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Chairperson of the Executive Council, Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal,
Director-General of the OPCW, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of Sri Lanka I welcome you back as the Chairperson of the Executive Council and express our confidence in your able stewardship to steer the proceedings of this session to a successful conclusion.

My delegation wishes to thank the Director-General, Ambassador Üzümcü for his comprehensive and insightful report presented at this session yesterday. We also express our sincere appreciation to the Director-General and his team at the Technical Secretariat for their commitment and dedicated efforts in guiding the activities of the OPCW toward the cherished goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

Sri Lanka aligns itself with the statement delivered at this session by the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Her Excellency Ambassador Haifa Aissami Madah, on behalf of NAM States Parties to the CWC and China.

This session takes place at a significant moment in the history of the Organisation, namely, the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention which established the OPCW.

We can look back with pride and a sense of satisfaction on the achievements of the OPCW over the last two decades. Due to the hard work of the Organisation, ably supported by the cooperation extended by States Parties, the Convention has emerged as the most successful disarmament treaty in the world, banning and attaining near total elimination of an entire class of weapons of mass destruction, an achievement that has been recognised with the award of the richly deserved Nobel Peace Prize to the OPCW in 2013. However, we can ill afford to be complacent with this success, amidst reports of alleged use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and elsewhere.

As a founder signatory State Party of the Convention, Sri Lanka reiterates its long standing principled position towards the achievement of general and complete disarmament, including the prohibition and elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and reaffirms that the use



of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals as a weapon anywhere by anyone and under any circumstances is reprehensible and completely contrary to the provisions of the Convention and all norms of international law.

We express our profound appreciation to the Russian Federation for completing the destruction of its entire declared stockpile of chemical weapons, which is a significant victory for the international community.

Sri Lanka participated at the recently concluded 18th edition of the OPCW Associate Programme, and as a part of the Industry Segment, for the third consecutive time, a Sri Lankan company, Camso Loadstar (Pvt) Ltd, together with the National Authority of Sri Lanka provided training for two participants from Nigeria and Ethiopia.

Further, with the assistance of the OPCW, the National Authority of Sri Lanka conducted the 5th Regional Basic Training Course on Emergency Response to Chemical Incidents in Colombo from 6 to 10 February this year. This course was attended by 37 participants drawn from various agencies in the region involved in chemical emergency response and civil defence.

Before concluding, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express Sri Lanka's strong support for the emerging consensus around Ambassador Fernando Arias of Spain for the post of Director-General of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, following three rounds of informal straw polls among Member States of the Executive Council.

We are confident that the OPCW will be in the safe hands of its new Director-General, Ambassador Arias, given his innate professionalism, excellent inter-personal skills and consensual style of working, which has won him the unanimous support of the Executive Council. The adoption of a decision by the Executive Council at this session, nominating Ambassador Arias, would, I believe, be duly endorsed by the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention later this year. I wish to offer my sincere felicitations to Your Excellency, Ambassador Belal for your skillful leadership of the arduous task of conducting the straw polls in an efficient, fair and transparent manner.

However, Sri Lanka is of the view that in the absence of established rules of procedure for the appointment of the Director-General of the OPCW, serious consideration should be given to formulating appropriate rules of procedure for the future appointment of the Director-General, giving due recognition for equitable, geographical and balanced gender representation in line with the practice of other international organisations.

I request the Technical Secretariat to circulate this statement as an official document of this session of the Executive Council and posted on the official website of the OPCW.

I thank you, Mr Chairperson.