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**GUATEMALA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADRESS MARITHZA RUÍZ DE VIELMAN  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA TO THE  
OPCW AT THE EIGHTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

My delegation endorses the statement, made by the Ambadress of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

Allow me to congratulate you on the work you have done over the past year as Chairperson of this Executive Council. It certainly has been hard but, thanks to your leadership, the tasks involved have been completed diligently, constructively and even with a good sense of humour.

I should like to touch on certain items on the agenda of this session of the Council and on the work we are facing in 2018.

This year we are faced with the task of assessing the Convention and preparing the way for the Conference which will study it. Our working agenda is substantial and, in this context, I should like to make particular reference to two items that are of interest to Guatemala: implementation of Article VII and the development of national technical capacities.

As regards implementation of Article VII, Guatemala attaches great importance to it, as it is the backbone of our efforts to achieve the object and purpose of the Convention. If the State Parties have no solid basis from which to guarantee compliance with the Convention, any discussion on security, non-resurgence, prevention or development may end up being irrelevant.

The States Parties' support for the implementation of Article VII is vital and it may be suitable, on occasion, to accompany the technical dialogue with a high-level political one. Certainly, Guatemala would like to thank the Technical Secretariat and the Article VII facilitator for the work and effort they are putting forth to achieve the full implementation of this Article.

With regard to the development of technical capacities, it is important for us to evaluate the role of the Convention in various scenarios. For instance, there are cases in which the priority is centred on economic and technological development. However, we should not ignore the fact that supporting the development of technical capacities in activities not prohibited by the Convention also contributes to the latter's security principles. We trust that the discussions in



the Open-Ended Working Group for Preparation of the Fourth Review Conference will be fruitful in this regard.

I should not like to miss the chance of thanking His Excellency Mr I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja, Ambassador of Indonesia, for the work he is doing at the head of the Open-Ended Working Group for Preparation of the Fourth Review Conference. I can assure him of Guatemala's commitment to promoting, and contributing to, the work of the group.

The 19th meeting of National Authorities of the States Parties of the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) will be held in Antigua Guatemala between 12 and 14 June 2018. Guatemala is developing the agenda together with the OPCW and the GRULAC Member States. We hope to have a full agenda, which will include matters of regional interest. We are keen to contribute through the exchange of best practices and technical knowledge in the region, which should result in better implementation of the Convention.

Guatemala rejects the use of chemical weapons, by any person under any circumstance. All the States here represented have, all of us, committed to this principle. It is deplorable that the use of toxic chemicals as weapons still presents a threat. We condemn the use of neurotoxic agents in Kuala Lumpur's international airport and recently in England. We look forward to receiving the reports on these incidents.

As regards the topic which the Council is discussing, we cannot forget the systematic violation of the principles of this Convention through the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

In this context, I should like to point to three matters worthy of attention:

First, the discrepancies in the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration are still with us. Not only do these have to be remedied or clarified, but also the dialogue between the Syrian authorities and the Technical Secretariat must remain current and consistent.

Secondly, the reports of the fact-Finding Mission and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism – a mandate which has regrettably not been renewed – indicate that incidents involving chemical weapons have been perpetrated in the Syrian Arab Republic. Last week we heard that in as little as five years there have been over 200 complaints of alleged use of chemical weapons in that country.

Lastly, we heard, also last week, about the assistance given by the Technical Secretariat to the Syrian Arab Republic in respect of a particular consignment of chlorine discovered in that country. We think that, under the circumstances, this fact should not be ignored.

There is no doubt whatever that the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic continues to be a worrying topic for security, and any efforts to prevent, condemn or investigate the use of chemical weapons in that country must be continued, and that is the appeal which Guatemala, as a responsible actor, is making.

That said, I should not like to finish without thanking the Technical Secretariat and the facilitators of the various working groups for their work, which is key to the future of this Organisation.

I should also like to express the hopes of my delegation that this session of the Executive Council will be a fruitful one.

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