

GERMANY

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTINE WEIL,

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY TO THE OPCW,

AT THE 88<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Madam Chairperson, Mr Director-General, distinguished colleagues,

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by the delegation of Austria.

I would like to thank Director-General Üzümcü for his comprehensive statement and to commend him and the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their dedicated and professional work. Especially in the light of the preparation and conduct of the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of States Parties, we are thankful for their hard work and for the support provided to all States Parties.

Furthermore, I want to express my gratitude to Director-General Üzümcü at the end of his term. Today, the OPCW is an efficiently functioning organisation. We owe this in great part to the tireless work and dedicated commitment of Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü. Director-General, Germany commends you for your leadership, your foresight and your dedication. In these troubling times, you and your able staff at the OPCW have done an extraordinary job.

Madam Chairperson,

The tragic death of a British citizen following the exposure to a nerve agent that was used in a reckless attempt at the life of Sergej and Julia Skripal in March of this year leaves us with shock. A second individual remains in critical condition. Our thoughts are with their family and friends and with the people of Wiltshire. I would like to express our solidarity with the British government. In a tragic way, we are reminded of the necessity to actively reinforce the absolute ban of chemical weapons.

The decision “Addressing the threat from chemical weapons use” approved by the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of States Parties is an important step in the right direction. As a co-sponsor Germany is very pleased with that outcome. We commend the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for its initiative and great dedication but also all States Parties that have joined the efforts and supported this decision. It has clearly demonstrated that an overwhelming majority of States Parties is ready to uphold the letter and the spirit of the Convention even in difficult times.

Germany has continuously stated that those responsible for chemical weapons use must be held accountable. Indeed, the majority of the States Parties expressed this view during the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of States Parties. Germany firmly believes that this decision is an important step towards a safer world free of chemical weapons. The decision will enable the Technical Secretariat to conduct its professional and independent work and to identify and report information regarding the origin of incidents of chemical weapons use. With its expertise and its

independent and impartial nature, the Technical Secretariat is well prepared to perform such a technical task of attribution. It is but a first step towards closing the impunity gap that has existed for too long now – but it is a most important step.

Germany stands ready to support the Technical Secretariat in implementing the decision adopted at the Fourth Special Session, including the strengthening of the CWC's verification regime. We look forward to the Director-General's submission to the Conference at its regular session in November of options and proposals for enhancing the capacities and tools of the Secretariat.

At the Fourth Review Conference to be held in November this year we seek to strengthen the OPCW in its capacities and reinforce the Convention. We welcome the useful work of the Open-Ended Working Group and the fruitful, effective discussions so far. We express our hope that we will continue to have constructive discussions and negotiations with States Parties from September on. Our aim is that the Fourth Review Conference will result in appropriate arrangements and set the course for a successful future of the OPCW.

Madam Chairperson,

We remain deeply concerned about the repeated use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, as well as about the incidents in the United Kingdom and Malaysia. In the last couple of weeks alone, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission reports have confirmed the high likelihood that chemical weapons were used on Syrian territory. To be very specific here, the FFM has reported uses of chemical weapons in Ltamenah on 24, 25 and 30 March 2017 and in Saraqib on 4 February 2018. Most recently, on 7 July, the OPCW issued an interim report on the incidents in Douma which caused the deaths of dozens and injured hundreds of men, women and children. We look forward to the final report on this incident.

The use of chemical weapons has to end, once and for all. Germany rigorously condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to cease using these horrendous weapons and to provide all necessary information on all outstanding issues. Inconsistencies and gaps in its declaration must finally be addressed comprehensively. All remaining chemical weapons and facilities must be destroyed under the surveillance of the OPCW. As a State Party, the Syrian Arab Republic must fulfil its obligations under the Convention.

Madam Chairperson,

Preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons, and the use of chemical weapons by non-state actors, are important tasks for all States Parties, and we express our full support to the OPCW and its Director-General in this undertaking.

Germany believes that, when dealing with the threat of chemical weapons use, States Parties have to take into account the dangerous reality of non-state actors who could acquire, produce and use toxic chemicals for attacks against the civilian population. The OPCW has taken on this important

challenge. It organised the first Conference on Countering Chemical Terrorism, which highlighted the work that still needs to be done in this regard.

Many thanks are due to the Director-General and his staff for the presentation of next year's budget [erste Sitzung am 06.07.]. In order to keep our Organisation working, it is of immense importance that all States Parties fulfil their obligations and pay their annual contributions and verification invoices. Arrears from past years are an expression of disrespect for this Organisation and an expression of disrespect for those States Parties that do pay their dues.

In closing, let me reiterate that we look forward to H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias taking up his position as the new Director-General of the OPCW later this month. Germany is ready to support him in every possible way to work with all States Parties towards strengthening the Convention. We need to make every effort to achieve our shared goal of ridding the world of the scourge of chemical weapons.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.