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**Statement by  
Ambassador Venu Rajamony,  
Permanent Representative of India to the OPCW  
at the 88<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Council,  
10 July 2018**

Madam Chairperson,  
Mr. Director General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

Madam Chairperson,

It is a great pleasure to have you chair the session. I am confident under your able leadership, this session will be guided to a successful conclusion. I assure you of my delegation's continued cooperation.

I would like to thank the Director General for his comprehensive statement and acknowledge the efforts made by the team under his leadership towards the implementation of the Convention and in advancing the common goal of a world free of chemical weapons. We express our deep appreciation to the Technical Secretariat and OPCW staff for their commitment to the aims and work of the organization, often in challenging circumstances. The comprehensive and emotional statement made by Director General Ambassador Üzümcü this morning has enlightened us as well as touched our hearts. My delegation commends Ambassador Üzümcü for his immense and lasting contribution to the Organization. During his two terms, the OPCW successfully dealt with many complex challenges. In recognition of its excellent work, the Organization was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013. I wish Ambassador Üzümcü the very best for his future endeavors.

India eagerly awaits the assumption of charge by Director General designate, Ambassador Fernando Arias. The fact that Ambassador Arias received the unanimous endorsement of all the members of the Executive Council is a testament to his popularity, abilities and suitability for the post. We are confident he will lead this organization to great heights and assure him of our full support.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of NAM States Parties to the CWC and China.

Madam Chairperson,

India attaches great importance to the Convention which embodies the global norm against the use of chemical weapons, and stands for its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. The Convention has now secured the commitment of 193 nations, thereby achieving near universality. India welcomes Palestine as the newest State Party to the CWC. We call upon the remaining States that are not Parties to the Convention to consider acceding to the Convention at the earliest.

Destruction of chemical weapons is the most important undertaking made by every State Party to the Convention. More than 96 per cent of the chemical weapons stockpiles declared by possessor states, have been destroyed under OPCW verification. These achievements are a testimony to the success of the Chemical Weapons Convention as a unique, non-discriminatory disarmament instrument which serves as a model for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. We hope that the remaining chemical weapons stockpiles will also be destroyed soon.

Madam Chairperson,

My delegation shares the wide-spread concern over fresh allegations on the use of chemical weapons coming from different parts of the world. We are saddened to learn about the tragic loss of life of a UK citizen in Amesbury following the exposure to a toxic chemical. We express our deepest sympathies to all victims of chemical weapon attacks and their families. It has been India's consistent position that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anybody, under any

circumstances, cannot be justified and the perpetrators of such abhorrent acts must be held accountable. The use of chemical weapons is in complete disregard of humanity and is reprehensible and contrary to the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention as well as accepted international legal norms.

India is deeply worried about reports of the so-called 'Islamic State' or ISIS/ISIL acquiring chemical weapons and their delivery systems. We request the Technical Secretariat to closely monitor this threat and report to the EC on this emerging challenge.

Any allegations of use of chemical weapons should be addressed in an effective and timely manner and strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. All investigations in this regard should be impartial and objective and must strive to establish facts and reach evidence-based conclusions. We urge that all provisions of the Convention be utilised to address concerns in accordance with the procedures laid down in the Convention.

Madam Chairperson,

One of the core commitments under Article XI of the Convention is the promotion of peaceful uses of chemistry, including international exchange of scientific and technical information as well as chemicals and equipment. India appreciates the continuing emphasis given by OPCW in this regard, through both established programmes as well as new initiatives. My delegation welcomes the holding of the 'Third Review and Evaluation Workshop of the Components of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI' on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2018 and expresses the hope that concrete proposals arising from such workshops can be included for discussion by the Open-Ended Working Group on Fourth Review Conference.

OPCW has achieved much success in moving towards the goal of a world free of chemical weapons and the threat of their use. However, there is no room for complacency especially in the light of emerging challenges such as discovery of new toxic chemicals and rapid advancements in deployment and dissemination of chemical weapons. Emergence of non-state actors and the threat of acquisition and use of chemical weapons by them, further complicates the situation. Easy availability of raw materials and increased access to technical knowhow through the internet, help subversive elements in crafting chemical weapons with comparative ease.

Effective national implementation under Article VII of the Convention, including through drafting and adoption of legislation as well as capacity building, provides a safeguard against such threats. Drawing upon our expertise in processing industry declarations under various regimes, India has developed dedicated software for the Industry to upload declarations. An on-line e-help-desk for anticipated guidance to the declaring facilities has also been made available on the website of our National Authority. We are willing to share this expertise with the other National Authorities in developing similar systems for achieving the common objectives of the Convention.

Madam Chairperson,

The ever-changing global security environment calls for greater and continued vigilance as well as renewed efforts towards enhancing the adaptive capacity of the organization. To this end, my delegation commends the efforts of the two Co-Chairpersons of the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities (OEWG-FP) and thanks them for the useful draft recommendations provided by them.

My delegation notes that the OPCW has emerged as a forum for consultation and cooperation on topics such as best practices in the area of chemical safety as well as countering chemical weapons terrorism. We commend the efforts of the Chairpersons of the Open-Ended Working Group

on Terrorism and the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors in this regard. We welcome the holding of a conference on countering chemical terrorism in The Hague in June 2018 and encourage more such efforts.

In the light of the upcoming Fourth Review Conference, my delegation appreciates the valuable work being done by the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fourth Review Conference under the leadership of the Ambassador Mr. I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja of Indonesia. We note with great satisfaction, the completion of the first cycle of Programme of Work. We stand ready to extend every support to the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fourth Review Conference.

Madam Chairperson,

As one of the original signatories of the Convention and an active member of the OPCW, India has always emphasized the importance of consensus and the need for all decisions to be taken by the States Parties in consultation with each other. It is the responsibility of all States Parties to preserve and protect the integrity and credibility of the Convention. Effective solutions to the challenges faced by the OPCW can be found through constructive engagement and dialogue. India remains willing and open for discussions with States Parties to find ways and means to strengthen the Convention and its effective implementation, within the framework of the Convention. Our efforts in the OPCW should help to eliminate all possibilities of any future use of chemical weapons and uphold the global norm against use of chemical weapons.

Madam Chairperson, I request that this Statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the OPCW's public website.

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