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**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DELIVERED BY MS JUDIT KOROMI
CHAIR OF THE WORKING PARTY ON NON-PROLIFERATION (CONOP) OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE
AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES
PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Turkey and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine align themselves with this statement. Andorra, Monaco, and San Marino also associate themselves with this statement.

The purpose of the European Union for this special Conference is to uphold the global ban on chemical weapons and to strengthen the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in performing the full scope of actions required by the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention), through a decision of the States Parties to the Convention.

We are grateful to the Director-General for his statement, which makes clear the situation before us and sets the stage for fruitful discussions and final agreement. As this is his last Conference of the States Parties, the European Union would like to commend Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü for his leadership, strategic vision, and persistent efforts in promoting and defending the Convention and its credibility, during a tenure that was marked by what was undoubtedly the most challenging period ever for the OPCW. We reiterate our appreciation to him and to the OPCW staff for your commitment to the work of the Organisation. Thank you, Excellency!

This is also the last Conference of the States Parties, in his capacity as a Permanent Representative, for a dear colleagues and friend, His Excellency Ambassador Fernando Arias



of Spain, who will, in less than a month, take in his hands the reins of the Technical Secretariat as new Director-General of our Organisation. ¡Enhorabuena, Fernando!

The European Union is a staunch supporter of the effective implementation and the universalisation of the Convention. We fully and consistently support the work of the OPCW, providing more than 40% of its budget. Earlier this year the Council of the European Union adopted Conclusions on chemical disarmament and non-proliferation that set out the position of the EU relating to the Fourth Review Conference for strengthening the regime of the Convention and enhancing the capabilities of the OPCW to face the new challenges.

Only a few weeks ago the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) confirmed that chlorine was likely used in a chemical weapons attack in Saraqib and that chlorine and sarin were very likely used in attacks in Ltamenah, Syrian Arab Republic. A horrific attack took place in April in Douma, Syria, exactly one year after the sarin attack in Khan Shaykhun that shook the world.

Daesh have repeatedly used chemical weapons in Syria and Iraq.

Last year in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, a VX nerve agent was used in a fatal incident.

On 4 March this year, we witnessed, for the first time on European soil in over 70 years, chemical weapons use. This was later confirmed by the OPCW technical assistance visit. The European Council condemned the chemical attack in Salisbury in the strongest possible terms and expressed unqualified solidarity with the United Kingdom in the face of this grave challenge to our shared security.

These serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole have put the global norm against the use of chemical weapons under threat.

We firmly believe that it is the international community's task and responsibility to identify and hold accountable individuals, entities, groups or governments responsible for the use of chemical weapons, and that the question of attribution can and should be addressed by the OPCW.

We have to send a clear signal of our indignation in the face of these atrocities, to reconfirm our joint commitment to uphold the global ban and to devise new measures to strengthen the norm against the use of chemical weapons.

In response to persistent allegations of chemical weapons attacks in Syria, the OPCW FFM was set up in 2014 and its findings were the basis for the work of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), an independent body established by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2235 of 2015 to identify the perpetrators of the chemical weapons attacks confirmed by the FFM.

The EU strongly supports the ongoing work of the FFM considering allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria and the OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team work verifying Syria's declarations and addressing the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies therein as identified by the Director-General. It is unacceptable that, more than four years after joining the Convention, Syria's declaration can still not be verified as accurate and complete. We call on Syria to engage meaningfully with the OPCW to resolve all outstanding concerns expeditiously. The EU calls upon all countries to use their influence to prevent any further

use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government and calls on the Syrian Arab Republic's allies to exercise appropriate pressure on the Syrian government to this end.

The United Nations General Assembly established in 2016, by Resolution 71/248, the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to assist in the investigation and prosecution of persons responsible for the most serious crimes under International Law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. The Mechanism seeks to support accountability processes aimed at bringing about justice for the victims of serious international crimes committed in Syria.

The European Union together with more than 30 countries and international organisations is taking part in the International Partnership against the Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. Dealing exclusively with the issue of impunity for the perpetrators of chemical attacks worldwide, the purpose of the partnership is to supplement the international mechanisms to combat the proliferation and use of chemical weapons.

We were disappointed with the impasse at the United Nations Security Council at the end of last year, which effectively terminated the Joint Investigative Mechanism. This outcome deprived the international community of a vital mechanism in the significant efforts designed to uphold the absolute ban on the use of chemical weapons and deter other would-be perpetrators. Restoring an independent mechanism for attribution has become particularly important in this regard.

The Convention allows the OPCW itself to go into attribution. The Organisation has the technical capacity and operational experience to, with the addition of appropriate expertise, carry out investigations for attribution purposes once it has the necessary information and evidence at its disposal. The OPCW Technical Secretariat has shown through its recent work, that once tasked and resourced to undertake challenging missions, it can more than deliver.

Every single State Party to the Convention present here has condemned the use of chemical weapons on different instances.

The use of chemical weapons, including the use of any toxic chemical as weapon, by anyone, be it a State, or a non-State actor, anywhere, and under any circumstances is abhorrent and must be rigorously condemned. It is a war crime and may amount to a crime against humanity. There can be no impunity and those responsible for such acts must be held accountable.

This is what keeps us together and keeps the global norm established by the Convention.

With all this in mind, in view of the current grave situation and the direct threat to the object and purpose of the Convention that the use of chemical weapons poses, the European Union and its Member States support the proposed draft decision as presented in document C-SS-4/DEC/CRP.1/Rev.1 and appeal to all States Parties to support and adopt this decision.

All States Parties to this Convention owe it to the victims of the chemical weapons attacks and to the future generations to whom we have committed ourselves to free the world from the scourge of chemical weapons.

I would kindly ask you, Mr Chairperson, to distribute this statement as an official document of the Conference and to publish it on the public web-sites of the Organisation. Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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