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ICELAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR THORDUR AEGIR OSKARSSON
SPECIAL ENVOY FOR ARMS CONTROL, DISARMAMENT AND
NON-PROLIFERATION AND ACTING PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
ICELAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES
PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

Iceland has aligned itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. However, due to the importance of the subject matter of this special session, I want to make few short comments in my national capacity.

For Iceland this issue is rather straightforward. The use of chemical weapons is a serious violation of international law and a crime against humanity. We attach fundamental importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention in dealing with this scourge.

Let us be reminded that the international community, in fact 193 countries, have agreed through the Convention that the development, production, stockpiling and transfer of these inhumane lethal weapons should be totally done away with. Two decades have now passed and the success of the Convention is beyond dispute, but the sad evidence of a surge in the use of chemical weapons brings home the reality that this is not the time to rest on our laurels. The Convention is being tested. After very recent abhorrent atrocities committed in the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Malaysia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, where chemical weapons have been blatantly used against innocent people, the participating states must step up and act in order to prevent such events occurring in the future.

I join the great majority of my colleagues in emphasising the importance of preserving the integrity and credibility of the Convention. The only way forward to guarantee the relevance of the Convention as a contributor to global security is to strengthen its implementation aspects through a mechanism of attribution, putting blame where it belongs. This step will facilitate needed efforts in various forums to tackle the glaring impunity of past atrocities.

Regrettably, when it comes to the use of chemical agents in the Syrian Arab Republic, we are amiss of the necessary leadership from the United Nations Security Council, the body which should bear primary responsibility for international peace and security.



There is an urgent and growing need to reinforce the rules-based international system that presently is experiencing serious challenges. The subject of this special session—attribution in the context of the Convention—and in the wider international context, the absence of accountability when it comes to use of chemical weapons, is most certainly part and parcel of these global security threats that must be addressed.

As repeatedly stated in various interventions here, the OPCW has the operational experience and expertise to 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 impartial and professional work that, once tasked, it delivers.

Through a decision of the States Parties to the Convention, this special session must preserve this important role by reinforcing the capability of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW in performing the full scope of actions required by the Convention.

I strongly welcome the decision just taken on the initiative of the United Kingdom, co-sponsored by many like-minded countries, including Iceland. The decision will mark a solid step forward in addressing this important issue of attributing responsibility. It has our unreserved support. However, the ultimate goal of the international community must be to erase impunity and guarantee accountability when State or non-State actors resort to the illegal use of chemical weapons.

Let me conclude by saluting Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü for his excellent stewardship of this fine Organisation through challenging times, and send our sincere wishes to his successor, Ambassador Fernando Arias.

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 websites of the Organisation. I thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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