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SWEDEN

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PER HOLMSTROM
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF SWEDEN TO THE OPCW
AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,

Let me start by welcoming you to back the chair at this important meeting and thanking the Director-General for his comprehensive report. Sweden is aligned with the statement delivered by Ms. Judith Körömi on behalf of the European Union. I would like to add a few comments in my national capacity.

One hundred years ago, in World War I, many thousands of those who perished or returned home with permanent injuries had suffered the consequences of chemical weapons—an abhorrent method of warfare which was subsequently outlawed and, almost 70 years later, totally banned through the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Despite this momentous achievement, in the recent past we have seen the use of chemical weapons repeatedly around the globe, in the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Malaysia and the United Kingdom—and in some of these cases there has been contravention of the Convention. Let me be clear. In Sweden's view, this development is absolutely unacceptable. It must be reversed and condemned in the strongest terms by the States Parties to the Convention.

This is why Sweden joined the countries calling for a special session of the Conference, and we are very pleased that this meeting is taking place today. We hope that it will provide an opportunity to recognise the important work of the OPCW, and set in motion a process to identify measures to strengthen the OPCW's verification system and protect against the use of chemical weapons by State and non-State actors. And let me take this opportunity to reiterate Sweden's support for, and full confidence in, the independent, impartial and professional work of the OPCW.

Since this is the last Conference of Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü, I would like to thank him for his tremendous contribution towards the great achievements of the Convention and the OPCW—a success story which has been recognised through the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize. I would also like this opportunity to welcome Ambassador Fernando Arias as his successor.

Attribution for chemical weapons use remains a key priority for Sweden. It is a crucial step towards accountability and an important deterrent against chemical weapons use.



Therefore, like many others, we were deeply disappointed when the mandate of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism was discontinued due to the repeated use of veto powers by one permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. As an elected member of that Council, Sweden was amongst those countries that tried hard to find a way to move forward on the issue, and to re-establish a mechanism that would fulfil the criteria of independent authority, impartiality, professionalism and expertise. We will continue to reject all proposals that seek to curtail the independence and integrity of investigators.

While a mechanism established by the United Nations Security Council would have been preferable, the issue of attribution is too important to be allowed to be blocked indefinitely. And the Conference clearly has the right to authorize the OPCW to take measures that are in support of the letter and spirit of the Convention.

In view of the above, Sweden fully supports the draft decision presented by the United Kingdom and others, and we call on all States Parties to vote in favour this week.

In conclusion, I would request that this statement be issued as an official document of this meeting and be placed on the public website. Thank you.

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