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**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ROSA BATORÉU
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC
TO THE OPCW
AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,

Let me begin with a word of gratitude and praise for the leadership and vision of Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü who, with the able support of the Technical Secretariat, has had to contend with a very challenging period at the helm of the OPCW but has also been able to achieve some major successes.

Portugal, likewise, reiterates its full confidence in the professional and personal qualities of Ambassador Fernando Arias to lead this Organisation, and I take this opportunity to assure him of Portugal's commitment to continue to cooperate with the OPCW during his mandate as Director-General.

It will not be an easy task. The OPCW is under threat and it is imperative that we all stand up for the Organisation, uphold the Convention, and maintain the global ban on chemical weapons. This is the reason why this Conference has been convened. It is now up to us, States Parties, to adopt a decision that will activate and strengthen the means to achieve those objectives.

Portugal fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by Ms. Judit Koromi on behalf of the European Union. Over the last few years, in spite of the efforts of the Technical Secretariat and of the OPCW as a whole to ensure the full implementation of the Convention and to improve the Organisation's working methods, we have been witnessing an alarming rise in the number of incidents involving the use of chemical weapons by State and non-State actors. Chemical weapons have been used in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic repeatedly, as well as in Malaysia and in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The use of chemical weapons, including the use of any toxic chemical as a weapon, by anyone, be it a State, or a non-State actor, anywhere, and under any circumstances is abhorrent and must be firmly condemned. It is a war crime and a crime against humanity. Those responsible for such acts must be identified and, hopefully, held accountable.



In the face of these horrible crimes, we have to express our indignation in the strongest possible terms for the violation and erosion of the norm against the use of chemical weapons, which we are gathered here to reaffirm and recommit ourselves to.

Portugal strongly supports the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic and regrets that it was not possible to renew the mandate of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism, which was perceived as a deterrent to the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

In these circumstances, it becomes particularly important to restore an independent mechanism for attribution in instances of use of chemical weapons.

Attribution is not a political or a judicial exercise to enforce accountability. It is, instead, a means to identify those who are responsible for the use of chemical weapons. This is clearly within the remit of the OPCW as stated in the Verification Annex of the Convention. The Conference of the States Parties must now confirm the Organisation's role in that regard.

Likewise, the Technical Secretariat must be ready to provide expertise, upon request, to any State Party investigating possible chemical weapons use in its territory, and, in general, should have an enhanced capacity and improved tools to strengthen the implementation of the Convention verification regime.

In view of the grave threat posed to the objective and purpose of the Convention by the continued use of chemical weapons with total impunity, Portugal believes that there is a clear need to adopt a decision that confirms the OPCW's capacity to pursue attribution, and to give it the necessary means to do so, in the case of use of chemical weapons.

I would kindly request that this declaration be circulated as an official document of the Conference and published on the website of the Organisation. Thank you.

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