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SINGAPORE

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JAYA RATNAM
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SINGAPORE TO THE OPCW
AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

When we last met in November 2017 for the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties, we welcomed the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the establishment of the OPCW as a milestone in the multilateral rules-based security architecture.

Even as we acknowledged that the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the OPCW for its accomplishments was well-deserved, we were acutely aware of the persistence of old threats and the emergence of new ones.

Singapore shares the views of the Director-General, who recently stated that “the CWC is not meant to only eliminate chemical weapons in a particular time frame but also to protect and to strengthen the norms against them in perpetuity. This means that our work is never done and that we need to continue to keep the Convention and the OPCW fully capable and active”.

We are therefore deeply disturbed by the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, in our own region at Kuala Lumpur airport, and also in Salisbury in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. These incidents seriously jeopardise the progress that we have achieved over the past two decades. We cannot stand idly by. There is an urgent need for action.

For this reason, Singapore joined others in supporting the convening of this special session of the Conference. At this special session, we look forward to listening and contributing to discussions on the way forward for the OPCW with regard to dealing with these pressing challenges.

Our delegation will be guided by the following approach. Firstly, we believe there is scope to improve and strengthen the role of the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat to help them better fulfil their mandate to respond to the evolving challenges as well as emerging threats. We will listen carefully to all proposals made on this subject.



Secondly, even as we do so, we must also look at how we—the States Parties and especially the Executive Council—can fulfil our responsibilities, particularly in ensuring effective oversight of the OPCW’s operations. It is imperative that the decision making process remains effective, transparent and accountable. This is a prerequisite for any proposal to strengthen the OPCW to be accepted.

Finally, we need new ways to look at old problems. As Chair of ASEAN, Singapore, through the agenda for the 2018 ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting, is advancing initiatives to improve the region’s ability to better respond to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threats, including from terrorist groups and rogue States.

We therefore welcome the OPCW’s efforts to strengthen national capacities, and more importantly, foster regional cooperation to deal with chemical threats, through the proposal for an ASEAN Regional Chemical Weapons Convention Capability Hub.

The OPCW is at an inflection point. We share the common goal of protecting the norm against the use of chemical weapons and upholding the rules of the Convention, and should be well aware of the consequences of failing to do so. Our responsibility is to identify the paths forward and act with unified intent, to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

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