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**SWEDEN**

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AT THE EIGHTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,

Let me join others in welcoming you, Ambassador Reinišová, back to the chair of the Executive Council and by thanking the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Belal. We very much enjoyed the congenial yet effective style with which Ambassador Belal guided our business during Sweden's second year as a Council member. I would also like to thank the Director-General for his statement covering the comprehensive agenda before us.

Sweden is aligned with the statement delivered by the Ambassador of Austria on behalf of the European Union. I would like to add, in my national capacity, a few short remarks of particular import to my country.

Let me first of all express my Government's condolences to the British people and to the family and friends of the woman who tragically fell victim to the effects of nerve agent exposure in Salisbury last week. This event shows once more the serious challenges that the Chemical Weapons Convention continues to face. We have an important task ahead of us, ensuring that the global ban on chemical weapons is universally respected, and that impunity is not tolerated.

In this regard, we welcome the fact that last month's special session of the Conference of States Parties condemned unequivocally recent cases of use of chemical weapons, expressed full support to the important work of the OPCW, and took measures to counter impunity and to identify ways and means to strengthen the Convention.

As concerns attribution for chemical weapons use in the Syrian Arab Republic, Sweden would have preferred to see that a new mechanism that fulfils the criteria of independence, authority, impartiality, professionalism and expertise could be established by the United Nations Security Council. As an elected member of that Council, Sweden has worked tirelessly towards that aim since the demise of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism last year. However, it is our view that the issue is too important to be allowed to be blocked indefinitely, which is why Sweden decided to co-sponsor the draft decision that was adopted by the Conference. We must now unite in support of the Technical Secretariat as it implements its new responsibilities.



Sweden would like to thank the Technical Secretariat for the four thorough and informative Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) reports issued since our last session. We were dismayed by the findings that both nerve agents and chlorine gas were likely used in further attacks in Idlib province in the spring of last year, as well as in February 2018. Our experts are looking into the interim report from the reported Douma attack—an attack that has been condemned by the European Union and its Member States. Sadly, we were not surprised to learn that chlorinated organic chemicals were found along with residues of explosives, which might confirm the misuse of chlorine as a chemical weapon. We thank the Technical Secretariat for its excellent and professional work despite difficult circumstances, and look forward to further reporting. Meanwhile, all relevant findings of the FFMs that have not yet been investigated for attribution need to be so, as soon as possible.

The Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) continues to produce excellent and valuable work, though we remain highly concerned with the large amount of outstanding issues. We call on the Syrian side to cooperate with the DAT proactively, so that the OPCW may be in a position, ultimately, to verify the veracity and completeness of its chemical weapons reports.

On a more positive note, Sweden welcomes the conference dedicated to countering chemical terrorism held in June, and are considering how we can contribute to the further consideration of that issue ahead of the Conference of the States Parties and the Review Conference.

In conclusion, I am looking forward to thanking the outgoing Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü for his tremendous contributions to the success of the Chemical Weapons Convention and to welcoming his successor, Ambassador Fernando Arias, later this week.

I would request that this statement be issued as an official document of this session of the Executive Council and be placed on the public website. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

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