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Statement by
Ambassador Venu Rajamony,
Permanent Representative of India to the OPCW
at the 89th Session of the Executive Council,
09 October 2018

Madam Chairperson,
Mr. Director General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

I welcome you back as the Chairperson of the Executive Council and assure you of my delegation's continued cooperation during this session. I am confident that under your leadership the session will be guided to a successful conclusion.

I would like to thank the Director General Ambassador Fernando Arias, who is attending his first session of Executive Council as the new Director General for his informative and comprehensive statement. We are confident that he will uphold the legacy of this organisation and lead it to greater heights. We assure our complete support to him and appreciate the commitment of the team under his leadership.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of NAM States Parties to the CWC and China.

Madam Chairperson,

India attaches great importance to the Convention which embodies the global norm against the use of chemical weapons, and stands for its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. The Convention has now secured the commitment of 193 nations, thereby achieving near universality. We call upon the remaining States that are not Parties to the Convention to consider acceding to the Convention at the earliest. Destruction of chemical weapons is the most important undertaking made by every State Party to the Convention. More than 96 per cent of chemical weapons stockpiles declared by possessor states have been destroyed under OPCW verification. We hope that the remaining chemical weapons stockpiles will also be destroyed soon.

My delegation believes that the OPCW has three important tasks (1) Achieving the disarmament objective in accordance with the provisions of the Convention (2) upholding the norm against the use of chemical weapons and (3) promoting the peaceful use of chemical technology and enhancing international cooperation in this regard.

My delegation shares the wide-spread concern over the allegations of the use of chemical weapons in different parts of the world. It has been India's consistent position that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anybody, under any

circumstances, cannot be justified and the perpetrators of such abhorrent acts must be held accountable. The use of chemical weapons is in complete disregard of humanity and is reprehensible and contrary to the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention as well as accepted international legal norms.

India is also deeply worried about the reports of the so-called 'Islamic State' or ISIS/ISIL acquiring chemical weapons and their delivery systems. We request the Technical Secretariat to closely monitor this threat and report to the EC on this emerging challenge.

Any allegations of use of chemical weapons should be addressed in an effective and timely manner and strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. All investigations in this regard should be impartial and objective and must strive to establish facts and reach evidence-based conclusions. We also urge that all provisions of the Convention be utilised to address concerns in accordance with the procedures laid down in the Convention.

Madam Chairperson,

The OPCW motto "working together for a world free of chemical weapons" evocatively encapsulates the philosophy of the Convention as well as our shared goals. My delegation welcomes the completion of the full and verified destruction of all 27 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. We encourage the continuation of high level consultations between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Technical Secretariat on the initial declaration by the Syrian Arab Republic and the findings of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). We recognize and appreciate the progress achieved in this regard under challenging circumstances and look forward to the resolution of all outstanding issues in a spirit of trust and cooperation. We note the work done so far by the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and await its reports on ongoing activities.

Madam Chairperson,

OPCW has achieved much success in moving towards the goal of a world free of chemical weapons and the threat of their use. However, there is no room for complacency especially in the light of emerging challenges such as discovery of new toxic chemicals and rapid advancements in deployment and dissemination of chemical weapons. Easy access to raw materials and technical knowhow, including through the internet makes it relatively easier for criminal elements to produce chemical weapons. Emergence of non-state actors further complicates the situation.

The ever-changing global security environment calls for greater and continued vigilance as well as renewed efforts towards enhancing the adaptive capacity of the organization. My delegation commends the efforts of the Chairpersons of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors towards facilitating discussions on topics such as best practices in the area of chemical safety and security, and the counterterrorism aspects of international trade in chemicals. We also firmly believe that the full and effective implementation of all the provisions of the Convention including the National Implementation under Article VII will make a significant and effective contribution towards global counter-terrorism efforts.

In the light of the upcoming Fourth Review Conference to be held from 21st to 30th November 2018, my delegation appreciates the valuable work being done by the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fourth Review Conference under the leadership of the Ambassador Mr. I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja of Indonesia. We commend Ambassador Puja for preparing the Informal Provisional text and for his guidance and able leadership during the discussions on the same.

As one of the original signatories of the Convention and an active member of the OPCW, India has always emphasized the importance of consensus and the need for all decisions to be taken by the States Parties in consultation with each other. It is the responsibility of all States Parties to preserve and protect the integrity and credibility of the Convention. Effective solutions to the challenges faced by the OPCW can be found through constructive engagement and dialogue. India remains willing and open for discussions with States Parties to find ways and means to strengthen the Convention and its effective implementation, within the framework of the Convention. Our efforts in the OPCW should help to eliminate all possibilities of any future use of chemical weapons and uphold the global norm against use of chemical weapons.

In conclusion, Madam Chairperson, I request that this Statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the OPCW's public website.