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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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TO THE OPCW AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE
OF THE STATES PARTIES TO REVIEW
THE OPERATION OF THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**

Mr Chairman,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished ambassadors and delegates,

It is an honour to join you today as part of the Fourth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”) to evaluate the implementation of the Convention and address significant developments over the last five years. Without a doubt, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has undergone more change and faced more challenges in the last five years than in the preceding fifteen years combined, greatly deserving its Nobel Peace Prize.

Indeed, the OPCW is a Nobel Peace Prize winning organisation for a reason. As highlighted by United States Deputy Secretary of State Sullivan at the historic special session of the Conference of the States Parties in June, the Organisation has proven, again and again, its ability to adapt readily to change, to respond ably and quickly to wide-ranging crises, and to remain relevant to the ever changing security environment, with its highly professional and dedicated experts. It is essential that the Organisation retain this adaptability. Responsible states parties must continue to find ways to deter future chemical weapons use and restore the international norm against the use of chemical weapons.

One of the founding principles of the Convention is to “exclude completely the possibility of use of chemical weapons, through implementation of the provisions” of the Convention. The success of this principle depends entirely on all States Parties’ compliance with their obligations. When States Parties fail to meet these obligations, they must be held accountable. No one should think that they can develop, retain, use, or transfer chemical weapons and get away with it. Unfortunately, there are States Parties in this room that think their conduct has no consequences and that they can act with impunity. Today, I would like to focus on non-compliance by those States Parties and highlight what we have done and what we need to do to take on the challenges posed by these States. Member States should join together, just as we did in June, and hold those responsible accountable.



First, let me start with addressing the Syrian regime's chemical weapons programme and its repeated use of chemical weapons against its own people.

Although destruction of the declared Syrian regime stockpile was completed in August 2014, the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons against its people from before it joined the Convention and its repeated use has continued. The Syrian regime repeatedly used chemical weapons to compensate for its lack of military manpower to achieve battlefield goals and to compel rebel surrender.

The Syrian Arab Republic was found responsible for four attacks in 2014, 2015, and 2017. It likely would have been found responsible for additional chemical weapons use if Russia had not used its veto on the United Nations Security Council to block renewal of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

To be clear, Syria has retained the ability to produce and use more chemical weapons. The United States assesses the regime still has chemicals-specifically sarin and chlorine-that can be used in future attacks. The Syrian military also has a wide variety of chemical capable munitions-including grenades, aerial bombs, and improvised munitions-that can be used with little or no warning. Indeed, the June Conference of the States Parties decision concludes that the Assad regime has failed to declare and destroy all of its chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities.

Next, I will turn to two states that are enabling Syria's chemical weapons use by shielding the Assad regime from consequences in international fora, while at the same time pursuing their own offensive chemical weapons programmes.

Iran. The United States has had longstanding concerns that Iran maintains a chemical weapons programme that it failed to declare to the OPCW. The United States is also concerned that Iran is pursuing central nervous system-acting chemicals for offensive purposes. These efforts are especially concerning because Iran is the world's leading State sponsor of terrorism and remains the most significant challenge to Middle East stability. I would like to highlight three examples of Iran's declaration failures:

- First, Iran failed to declare its transfer of chemical weapons to Libya in the 1980s. When the post-Gaddafi Libyan government found these weapons in 2011, Iran never declared the transfer of the weapons, despite formal requests from OPCW to the States Parties about their origin. They were clearly of Iranian origin as evidenced by the Farsi writing on the boxes containing the artillery shells.
- Second, Iran has not declared all of its riot control agents. Iran has marketed delivery systems and chemicals, including CR at defence expos. Iran has not declared any holdings of CR.
- Third, Iran failed to submit a complete chemical weapons production facility declaration, specifically a CWPFF filling capability. In light of the discovery of chemical-filled artillery projectiles and aerial bombs that Iran transferred to Libya and assessed Iranian-origin chemical-filled 81mm mortars found by Iraq during United Nations Special Commission inspections, the United States assesses that Iran filled

and possessed chemical weapons. Iran, however, did not declare a CWPF filling capability.

Let me turn now to Russia. In March 2018, only months after claiming to have completed destruction of its chemical weapons stockpile, Russia used an unscheduled, military-grade nerve agent in an assassination attempt of the Skripals in Salisbury, the United Kingdom. The UK's investigation into the assassination attempt on Sergei and Yulia Skripal concluded that two Russian nationals were responsible for the attack and that these two individuals are officers from the Russian military intelligence service, also known as the GRU.

The use of this nerve agent in Salisbury demonstrates that Russia has not met its obligations under the Convention and still maintains a chemical weapons programme, in clear violation of Article I. The United States again urges Russia to abandon its chemical weapons programme, declare and fully eliminate it under international verification. Russia must be held accountable for flouting its international obligations under the Convention.

Further, as the United States has underscored repeatedly, the Russian Federation's actions to shield the Syrian regime from international accountability also make it complicit in the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons.

Now let me turn to what we are doing to address non-compliance and what other States Parties can also do together so that when this august body meets again in five years' time we may be closer to fully realising a world free of chemical weapons.

First, ensuring accountability: In June, responsible States joined together in adopting the decision "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use" which provides the OPCW Technical Secretariat with additional tools to respond to chemical weapons use, including the means to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in Syria. Importantly, the decision also directs the OPCW to share information it collects with the United Nations, to build capability to defend against chemical weapons use, and to obtain the advice of outside experts for Technical Assistance Visits, if needed. These tools should serve as a deterrent for State and non-State actors considering the use of chemical weapons in the future. It is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that the special Conference of the States Parties decision is fully implemented.

Second, updating the Chemical Weapons Convention Schedules: Last month, the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands submitted to the Director-General a technical proposal to update the Annex on Chemicals in accordance with Article XV, paragraph 5 of the Convention. Specifically, we seek to add two families of chemicals to the Schedules that include the novichok chemical agent used in Salisbury and that claimed a life in Amesbury. Novichoks are military-grade nerve agents with no known purposes not prohibited by the Convention. We call on all States Parties to support the technical change proposal so that these heinous chemicals can be added to Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals without delay and thus be subject to the Convention's stringent verification regime.

Third, retaining OPCW capability, flexibility, and expertise through Voluntary Contributions to the Future OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology: The United States strongly supports this initiative of the Director-General to ensure that the laboratory further enhances its analytical capabilities and maintains its stature as a world-class institution. We are further

reviewing our options to financially contribute toward such an important effort and encourage other States Parties to also lend financial support to this important undertaking.

Fourth, endorsing a CNS-acting Chemical Non-Use Policy Statement: The United States calls on responsible States to endorse a non-use policy regarding aerosolisation of CNS-acting chemicals. This endorsement would include international support recognising that the aerosolised use of CNS-acting chemicals is not consistent with the law enforcement exception to the Convention. The United States proposed taking this step last year, and we propose it once again. Let us not wait to take action on this issue until it is too late.

To conclude, the United States believes that all of us gathered here today have a vested interest in the success of the mission of the OPCW. Restoring the norm against chemical weapons use is a collective responsibility that calls for collective action. I challenge us all never to forget why this Organisation was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013 and to channel our collective determination to rid the world, once and for all, of all chemical weapons.

Mr Chairman, I request that this statement be considered an official document of the Fourth Review Conference and posted on the external server and the public website.

Thank you.

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