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SWEDEN

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ANNIKA MARKOVIC
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SWEDEN TO THE OPCW AT THE FOURTH
SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO REVIEW
THE OPERATION OF THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**

Chairperson,

Let me first of all welcome you, Ambassador Vásquez Gómez, to the chair, and thank Ambassador I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja for chairing the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fourth Review Conference. You can count on the full support of my delegation. Sweden welcomes the fact that, following the accession by Angola, Myanmar, Somalia, the State of Palestine and Syria, the number of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention now stands at 193 – more than any other disarmament and non-proliferation treaty to date.

Sweden is aligned with the statement delivered by Special Envoy Jacek Bylica on behalf of the European Union. I will add a few remarks in my national capacity.

As a strong champion of disarmament and non-proliferation, rules-based multilateralism and accountability for violations of international law, Sweden continues to view the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “The Convention”) and the OPCW as indispensable pillars of our collective security. As a member of the United Nations Security Council and the OPCW Executive Council over the past few years, we have been intimately involved in global efforts to safeguard those accomplishments and to preserve and strengthen the regime.

Several momentous events in the months following the last Review Conference in 2013 led to a heightened awareness in the international community of the threat that chemical weapons still pose, and the crucial role of the Convention and the OPCW. Before the end of that same transformative year, we had witnessed the horrendous sarin attack in Al-Ghouta, Syria, the United States of America-Russian Federation framework agreement codified in United Nations Security Council resolution 2118, and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the OPCW “for its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons”. This dichotomy defines the developments during the five years under review: On the one hand steady progress in the destruction of chemical weapons; on the other repeatedly serious challenges to the no-use norm against chemical weapons in Iraq, Malaysia, Syria and the United Kingdom.

Looking ahead to the up-coming review period, there are a number of important challenges that we as States Parties must address:



Firstly, we must achieve an immediate halt to all use of chemical weapons. In Syria, chemical weapons have been used repeatedly by the Syrian regime and Daesh, as confirmed by the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism. Sweden therefore shared the concerns of many about the recent allegations of impending use of chemical weapons in Idlib in Syria, following the Syrian regime's brutal sarin attack on Khan Shaykhun last year and continued cases of confirmed use of sarin and chlorine gas there in 2017 and 2018. It is of utmost importance that the ceasefire in Idlib is upheld and that the respect for the Convention is ensured.

Considering the repeated use of chemical weapons by Daesh in Syria, and reportedly also in Iraq, we must redouble our joint efforts to address the extremely serious matter of the terrorist threat. Sweden welcomes the Executive Council's decision on non-State actors last year, and the report prepared by the Technical Secretariat in response to the 27 June decision of the Special Conference of the States Parties. We will be hosting a side event on chemical security on Tuesday 27 November, in cooperation with the Technical Secretariat. This event will consider how lessons learned from nuclear and radiological security might inform the ongoing efforts to strengthen OPCW assistance to States Parties wishing to strengthen their resilience against non-State actor threats.

Secondly, we must hold to account those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in contravention of the Convention. Any such use constitutes a threat to international peace and security and is a serious violation of international law. Impunity is not an option. That is why Sweden has worked tirelessly in the United Nations Security Council, including with other elected members, to reach an agreement on a renewed mechanism for attribution in Syria; though ultimately to no avail as veto powers were used to block any progress. That is also why Sweden joined the French-led "International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons" and why we co-sponsored the June decision of the Special Conference of the States Parties. The decision's unequivocal condemnation of chemical weapons use around the world was well overdue. While an attribution mechanism established by the United Nations Security Council would have been preferable, the issue was too important to be allowed to be blocked indefinitely. As States Parties, we have a shared responsibility to support the Technical Secretariat as it implements its charge pursuant to the June decision of the Special Conference of the States Parties. At the same time, we should not forget that the United Nations Security Council maintains its special responsibility with regard to accountability.

Thirdly, we must prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. To address future contingencies involving chemical weapons effectively, Sweden continues to stress that the OPCW must continue to have experienced inspectors on staff. We welcome the options for strengthening verification prepared by the Director-General in response to the June decision. We look forward to constructive discussions on these and other proposals, including ways to strengthen the OPCW Central Analytical Database (OCAD).

Following the attempted murder by use of a so-called "Novichok agent" in Salisbury in March this year, we would like to thank the United Kingdom for the transparency that it continues to show with regard to this sordid matter. We have every confidence in the findings of the United Kingdom investigation that the Russian intelligence services were behind the incident. As regards technical follow-up to that incident, the matter clearly needs to be addressed without delay in order to prevent any perception of a loophole in the Convention. We welcome the proposal for a change to the Schedules of chemicals put forward by three

States Parties. In this context, I would also like to announce that Sweden has decided to join the co-sponsors of the joint paper on central nervous system (CNS)-acting chemicals promoted by Australia and Switzerland.

Last but not least, we must finish the disarmament of all existing chemical weapons. Sweden welcomes the completion of destruction of declared chemical weapons in Iraq, Libya, Russia and Syria, and once again calls on the United States to expedite destruction in line with the Convention and relevant decisions of the Conference. Sweden was dismayed to learn that the Syrian declarations turned out to be incomplete, having provided financial, analytical and logistical support to the United Nations-led operation to assist in the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons stockpile. We once again demand that the Syrian regime cease and desist using chemical weapons and instead work transparently and proactively with the Declaration Assessment Team, so that the OPCW may ultimately be able to verify the accuracy and the completeness of the Syrian declarations. I am pleased to announce that Sweden is making a further extrabudgetary contribution of 2 000 000 Swedish krona to the OPCW that may be used for special missions in Syria and for attribution.

Sweden also calls on the DPRK, Egypt, Israel, and South Sudan to become party to the Convention without further delay, in order to make the reach of the convention's prohibitions truly global.

In conclusion, let me express Sweden's support to the OPCW's international cooperation activities. Sweden contributes to this work, inter alia, through analytical chemistry training and Sida-funded grants of the International Foundation for Science. I once again call on the OPCW to adopt a gender perspective to this and all other aspects of its work. This also entails improving the gender balance among senior positions in the Technical Secretariat.

Finally, I would urge all States Parties to be constructive and innovative to find the unity necessary to make real progress at this important conference. Let us not let those questions that divide us overshadow those that unite us in support of the noble goals of our Convention. The armistice after the Great War 100 years ago and the end of the Second World War in 1945, raised expectations that we might one day see the end of chemical warfare and all unspeakable atrocities involving toxic chemicals. This hope seemed borne out by the advent of the Convention at the eve of the last century but is now put to the test. Let us use this Conference and the years ahead, once more to stake out a course towards a world free of chemical weapons. This we owe to the victims of these repugnant weapons.

I would request that this statement be issued as an official document of this session of the Fourth Review Conference and be placed on the public website.

Thank you, Chairperson.

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