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**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DELIVERED BY MR. JACEK BYLICA, SPECIAL ENVOY FOR DISARMAMENT AND
NON-PROLIFERATION, AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE
CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO REVIEW THE OPERATION OF THE
CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The Candidate Countries Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Turkey, the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries Iceland, and Norway, members of the EEA (European Economic Area), as well as Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine align themselves with this statement. Andorra, Monaco, and San Marino also associate themselves with this statement.

The European Union pays tribute to Ambassador I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja from Indonesia, Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group for the preparation of the Fourth Special Session of the Conference to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and Ambassador Jana Reinišová from the Czech Republic, Chairperson of the Executive Council, for their tireless efforts and outstanding performance in guiding the preparatory work. We express our full support to Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador in his capacity as the Chairperson of the Fourth Review Conference.

The European Union also acknowledges the professionalism and efforts of the OPCW Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) under the leadership of its Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias. We have full confidence in the capacity of the Secretariat to implement the decisions and tasks resulting from this Review Conference.

The European Union considers the Chemical Weapons Convention to be a key instrument of the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. The recent use of chemical weapons has seriously threatened to undermine the universal prohibition of these weapons. The international community must overcome differences, unite and intensify our efforts to uphold the global norm against chemical weapons. We strongly believe it is in the best interest of all States Parties to preserve the integrity of Chemical Weapons Convention



(hereinafter “the Convention”) and to enable the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to fulfil its responsibilities during the next five years.

In decisive moments like now we, the States Parties, will need to agree on clear objectives and priorities for the future. For its part, the European Union is promoting a list of essential issues adopted by the Council of the European Union on 16 April 2018. For ease of reference, the EU position has been posted on OPCW’s Extranet under the sub-heading “Fourth Review Conference – Open-Ended Working Group”.

Ending use and preventing impunity for the use of chemical weapons must be at the centre of our efforts and deliberations during the Fourth Review Conference. In the face of serious breaches of the non-use norm since the Third Review Conference by State and non-State actors in the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Malaysia and recently in the United Kingdom, concrete measures are urgently needed to deter and end use of chemical weapons, to hold perpetrators to account and prevent further erosion of the non-use norm.

The European Union considers that the adoption of the Decision “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use” (C-SS-4/DEC.3) by the Conference of the States Parties at the Fourth Special Session on 27 June 2018 is a crucial step to this effect. It directs the Secretariat to put in place arrangements to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in Syria and to provide regular reports on its investigations to the OPCW Executive Council and to the United Nations Secretary General for their consideration.

This Decision also enables the OPCW to provide assistance in identifying perpetrators, organisers, sponsors or those otherwise involved whenever chemical weapons use occurs on the territory of a State Party, if requested by a State Party so affected. This decision aims to serve every State Party, inter alia whenever they may need technical assistance from the OPCW and its Secretariat, and thus should be perceived as an asset of shared value to all countries signatories to the Convention. We thank the Director-General for the proposals he submitted regarding the implementation of this decision. It is the clear responsibility of States Parties to ensure that the outcome of the Fourth Review Conference assists the OPCW Secretariat to deliver on the tasks it has been given.

The European Union continues to strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. The international community must send clear messages and proactively mobilise all efforts to uphold the spirit of the Convention and support the Convention with concrete measures. For this purpose, in October this year the EU introduced a new regime of restrictive measures dedicated to fighting the proliferation and use of chemical weapons and their precursors. The EU also commends the initiative by France in establishing the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

The European Union continues to firmly support the important work of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) in investigating reports of chemical weapons use, and seeking to verify Syria’s declaration. It is vital to establish the facts on the production and use of these heinous weapons. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to ensure unfettered and safe access to all locations the FFM deems necessary and to work with the DAT to address the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies identified in its declaration.

While responding to new challenges, securing universal adherence to the Convention must remain a top priority. The European Union encourages the Secretariat and States Parties to engage in targeted and tailor-made activities to achieve full universality during the next intersessional period.

During the next intersessional period decisive steps are needed in order to support the implementation of the Convention and ensure the capacity and capability of its implementing body, the OPCW Secretariat, is strengthened and protected.

The European Union believes that capacity building is essential to assist States Parties in fulfilling their obligations under the Convention and to cope with the fast moving developments in science and technology. The EU stands ready to continue its support to the capacity-building efforts at national and regional level. We will also continue supporting outreach activities to engage all relevant stakeholders such as chemical industry, think tanks, academia, civil society organisations and NGOs, for cooperation, synergies and awareness-raising purposes.

The transformation of the OPCW laboratory into a Centre for Chemistry and Technology will be a qualitative leap in the Organisation's capacity to perform its core tasks in verification, inspection and capacity building. We call upon all States Parties to contribute to this project. For its part the European Union is considering a major contribution in the context of work for a new EU Council Decision for support to OPCW core activities.

The EU is of the view that the OPCW needs to have flexibility to retain special expertise and capabilities necessary for its effective functioning. We also encourage the Director-General to consider active measures for improving the gender and geographic balance within the Secretariat at all levels while continuing to recruit staff with the necessary skills and expertise. The European Union welcomes the OPCW Director-General's commitment to mainstream a gender perspective in the work of the Organisation. The Secretariat should be tasked to present for the States Parties' consideration proposals to help satisfy future OPCW staffing requirements as regards expertise, gender and geographic balance, taking into account the recent study by external experts regarding tenure policy.

The EU calls on all States Parties to contribute to a successful outcome of this Conference. We need a strong and meaningful final document ensuring the integrity and strict application of the Convention.

The Convention and OPCW are needed more than ever. We are living at a critical juncture, as on one hand, universality of the Convention and the destruction of declared chemical weapons are not yet complete. On the other hand, we need to ensure we are well prepared to stop the re-emergence of chemical weapons. Preventing impunity and safeguarding the non-use norm is at the heart of this all. Let there be no misunderstanding.

Twenty one years of history have confirmed without any doubt that the Convention is a common public good. Not investing in the OPCW would be a grave error on the part of all of us here today. Strengthening the capacity of the Organisation established to achieve the objective and purpose of the Convention must be the primary answer to the global re-emergence of chemical weapons use.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.