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**ITALY**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ANDREA PERUGINI  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ITALY TO THE OPCW  
AT THE EIGHTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,  
Mr Director-General,  
Distinguished ambassadors and delegates,

Let me begin by welcoming back the Chairperson, Ambassador Reinišová, and congratulating Ambassador Fernando Arias, at his first session of the Council in his capacity as the new Director-General of the OPCW.

I thank you for your statement and commend you and the Technical Secretariat staff for your excellent work. You can count on the full support of Italy in the challenging endeavour of carrying out the transition of the Organisation from an era when the destruction of chemical stocks was a priority into a context marked by the emergence of new global challenges and priorities. This happens against the backdrop of a persisting failure by a State Party to demonstrate its full compliance with the Convention and while we are witnessing repeated violations of the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons over the last months. We wish to renew our solidarity to the victims and reiterate our condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the use of any chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, anytime, and under any circumstances.

A few remarks in my national capacity to complement the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union.

As recalled in various statements, regrettably, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) reports confirmed that chemical weapons have been used in the Syrian Arab Republic in the last years. In this respect, Italy continues to fully support the work of the FFM as long as necessary, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, especially in view of the large number of alleged incidents reported and we are looking forward to receiving the relevant updates. Thus, we again call on the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as to all relevant actors in the country, to extend their full and transparent cooperation to the FFM.

Furthermore, we had expected that the Declaration Assessment Team's (DAT) efforts would definitely close the gaps and eliminate discrepancies. On the contrary, the Technical Secretariat still reported that after four years of efforts it *"is still not able to resolve identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies in Syria's declaration, and therefore cannot fully verify that Syria has submitted a declaration that can be considered accurate and complete in*



*accordance with the Convention or Council decisions*". We urge the Syrian Authorities, once again, to clarify swiftly all outstanding issues. These continue to jeopardise the effectiveness of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Protracted lack of accountability is affecting the ability of the international community to act in defence of the Convention. Thus, in order to prevent further atrocities caused by the use of chemical weapons, the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention adopted an important decision requesting the Director-General to put in place arrangements "to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons" in Syria and to submit specific proposals for the establishment of independent, impartial, expert arrangements that could potentially support the Technical Secretariat in fulfilling its mandate. It is our responsibility to support the Director-General, consistently with our common interest in preserving, protecting, and developing the Organisation.

We have heard that at the next regular session of the Conference, scheduled for November 2018, the Director-General has anticipated that he will submit proposals, tools, and options to strengthen the capability of the Technical Secretariat in several different areas. Let me stress that we are ready to support his efforts and we call upon all States Parties to work constructively to strengthen our common good, the chemical non-proliferation regime and its main instruments, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the OPCW.

The universal non-discriminatory adherence to the Convention as well as the full implementation of Article VII remain a top priority to contribute to global security and to the strengthening of the effectiveness of the chemical non-proliferation regime, one of the most successful regimes. While universality is consistent with the horizontal implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the adoption of national legislation is substantial for its vertical implementation. The notion of horizontal universality is insufficient without appropriate vertical implementation.

Notably, in this regard, the requirement for States Parties to implement and extend national penal legislation in order to criminalise all activities undertaken by natural and legal persons that are prohibited to a State Party by the Convention is - and still remains - one of the most important priorities of the incoming review Conference. Without domestic penal legislation related to the Chemical Weapons Convention, violations may go unpunished and compliance may suffer. The recent incidents show once again that reality goes well beyond imagination. Progress was made in a number of aspects, but adoption of national legislation is still too slow and it is clear that additional efforts, with the support of the Regional Groups and Regional Organisations, are needed. In this respect we join the appreciation already expressed by other delegations for the commendable work that is being carried out by Ambassador Puja of Indonesia as Chairperson of the OEWG on the outcome document of the Fourth Review Conference.

Italy supports the OPCW's draft Programme and Budget for 2019 drawn up in compliance with the decision adopted by the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties, which shows that the Organisation needs to be equipped with the necessary instruments to face emerging challenges. Such new scenarios will need to be reassessed against the guidance of the States Parties pertaining to zero nominal growth. Notwithstanding the above, we remain concerned about the financial problems that the OPCW is still facing, in particular those caused by failure to honour the assessed annual contributions to the

OPCW, which constitutes non-compliance with the obligations under the Convention, and which undermines the capacity of the Secretariat to fully discharge its core tasks and activities, thereby diverting resources otherwise destined to the assistance to those States Parties that are in need of support. Therefore, we call on all States Parties to fulfil their obligations in order to contribute to replenish the OPCW's Working Capital Fund, as required by the Financial Regulations.

I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Eighty-Ninth Session of the Executive Council and posted on the OPCW external server and web site.

Thank you.

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