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FINLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PÄIVI KAUKORANTA
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FINLAND 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 Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Excellencies and dear colleagues,

I would like to congratulate you, Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez, on your election as Chairperson of the Fourth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention. I also want to thank Ambassador Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja and Ambassador Jana Reinišová for their efforts in the preparations of the Conference. Let me assure you of Finland's full support in achieving a successful outcome of this important meeting.

I would also like to pay tribute to Director-General Fernando Arias and the Technical Secretariat for their valuable work in taking forward the implementation of the Convention. Finland has full confidence in the expertise, professionalism and impartiality of the Technical Secretariat in carrying out its important mandate.

Finland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. I would, however, like to highlight a few topics of particular importance to Finland.

The Chemical Weapons Convention represents a major achievement. Already over 96% of declared chemical weapons have been destroyed and only a few countries remain outside the Convention. In many ways, the Convention is the most successful international arms control instrument thus far. Sadly, this is no longer the full story.

Finland is concerned about how the current treaty violations undermine the global arms control and disarmament regime. We should not let the treaty based international order to erode.

Since the Third Review Conference in 2013, we have seen a dangerous erosion of the universal norm against the use of chemical weapons. With the confirmed incidents in Syria and Iraq, Malaysia and the United Kingdom, we are witnessing developments today that would have seemed unimaginable just five years ago. Absolute norms of international law are being blatantly broken, and the integrity of the Convention is being challenged in an unprecedented manner.



In the current situation, as States Parties, our most urgent priority is to preserve the integrity of the norm against the use of chemical weapons, and ensure that those who violate it are held to account.

The decision on attribution taken at the Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties in June marked an important milestone. Reinforcing the capacity of the OPCW to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons is a first, important step in combatting impunity for these crimes. Going forward, we must ensure that the OPCW has the support and resources needed to implement the decision. The adoption of the budget for 2019 yesterday was a good start.

We also wish to commend France for the initiative of establishing the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. The Partnership is a valuable contribution towards our joint aim of achieving accountability.

Looking ahead, continuous development of the Convention regime is needed for the OPCW to be able to react to changing realities and respond to new and emerging threats. This requires constant follow-up and alignment of the activities of the Organisation.

Maintaining a strong verification regime is essential. Supporting the network of designated laboratories and strengthening the status of the 'General Purpose Criterion' are important for ensuring our ability to meet future challenges and respond to developments in science and technology. In this context, we commend the important work of the Scientific Advisory Board. We also strongly support the initiative of Canada, the Netherlands and the United States to add two new chemical agent families to the Schedules of the Convention's Annex on Chemicals.

The Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (VERIFIN) has offered training for experts and chemists from developing countries already since 1990. To date, almost 1500 trainees from 138 countries have participated in various training courses at VERIFIN. Female scientists are preferred whenever possible, following the principles of the Finnish Development Policy. Courses are provided mainly in the analysis of chemical warfare related chemicals from environmental and biomedical samples, but also on the activities of National Authorities in implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The latest version of the Finnish Blue Book, the "Recommended Operating Procedures for Analysis in the Verification of Chemical Disarmament", was published at an international workshop in Helsinki in last December. The Blue Book 2017, as per previous versions, was coordinated by VERIFIN, and was written as an international collaboration of a group of more than seventy authors and reviewers from twenty-two laboratories working on the field of Chemical Weapons Convention-related analysis. New additions include, for example, chapters on analysis of ricin and central nervous system (CNS)-acting chemicals.

The Embassy of Finland and VERIFIN will organise a side event on the Blue Books and the role of verification on Thursday, 22 November 2018, at 1pm in the Europe room. You are all warmly welcome to attend.

Finland also strongly supports the further development and expansion of the OPCW Central Analytical Database (OCAD). The OCAD is by far the widest existing database of chemical

warfare agents and a key tool in ensuring the continued effectiveness of the verification regime. Its development and expansion with relevant chemicals should be in all our interest.

On the subject of central nervous system-acting chemicals, Finland is a co-sponsor of the joint paper initiated by Australia and Switzerland. Continuation of the discussion on aerosolized CNS-acting chemicals in law enforcement is important, and we encourage further steps in the framework of the OPCW.

While recognising the non-career character of the OPCW employments, Finland supports a higher degree of flexibility in the implementation of the tenure policy of the Organisation in order to optimise operational effectiveness and the efficient use of resources. We also continue to champion the improvement of gender balance at the OPCW, especially in senior positions.

Mr Chairperson, Finland remains a strong advocate of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We will continue to offer our support and expertise to the OPCW also in the future.

To conclude, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Conference, and published on the OPCW website and extranet.

Thank you.

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