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**BANGLADESH**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SHEIKH MOHAMMED BELAL PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH 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 of the Fourth Review Conference, Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez,  
Mr Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias,  
Members of international organisations, specialised agencies, and scientific community,  
Members of civil society, the Media and NGOs,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to begin with a greeting, happy Thanksgiving, particularly to those who are from across the Atlantic. The spirit of the thanksgiving is about remembering the things in our lives that we appreciate. So, here, my friends, we may have, unknowingly unplugged you from your own family and friends on this Thanksgiving Day, only to re-plant you in the community of OPCW families as we wish to reshape our tomorrow with your sacrifice of today.

Mr Chairperson, my dear friend, Your Excellency Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez, please accept our felicitations and warm welcome as Chairperson of the Fourth Review Conference. If there is anyone who can deliver a report, at the end of this session, it is you my dear friend, Ambassador Agustín. On our part, we pledge our full support and cooperation to you and the members of your Bureau in the discharge of your mandate.

My delegation would also like to express our gratitude to the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fourth Review Conference, Ambassador Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja of Indonesia, for his untiring efforts on the preparation for the Fourth Review Conference. We would also like to congratulate Co-Chairs of the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities, Ambassador Sabine Nölke of Canada and Ambassador Vusi Bruce Koloane of South Africa. We also acknowledge the critical role and ability of H.E. Mr Marcin Czepelak, Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole of the Fourth Review Conference.

We also take the opportunity to register our appreciation to the Chairperson of the Twenty-Third Session of the Conference of the States Parties, Ambassador Yun-young Lee of the Republic of Korea, and the Chairperson of the Twenty-Second Session of the



Conference of the States Parties, Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki of the Kingdom of Morocco, for all their dedicated efforts during those sessions of the Conference.

The delegation of Bangladesh wishes to thank the Director-General for his leadership at this crucial juncture of the OPCW. A person who has seen inside and outside of the OPCW, even before his formal assumption of this high post, is the best we could manage to get for an Organisation that we love from the core of our hearts. And for you my friend, Ambassador Fernando Arias, you are much better off as you don't need to fight it from there as we have been doing it for you. After the Tuesday night's deliberations, if I am allowed to read your mind, you would have been saying to your star, "thank God, I am no longer on the floor." But as you experienced, we might have been momentarily knocked off our feet, with a footnote, but we picked ourselves up. Mr Director-General, rest assured we will keep going and we will finish the race as a community.

Mr Director-General, you deserve our utmost appreciations for the hallmarks that you have already imprinted in the workings of the OPCW. Among so many, your embrace of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on 26 October 2018 when you organised the "Forum on Peaceful Uses of Chemistry: Potential Contribution of the OPCW to the UN SDGs" deserves special mention.

An Organisation dedicated to the cause of non-violence couldn't remain indifferent to the SDGs. Mahatma Gandhi once said "Poverty is the worst form of violence". No matter wherever we work, whatever we do, we should not forget, for a moment, about this "violence of poverty". When one is in poverty, our message of peace and disarmament will sound nothing but a false promise to those people whom we wish to serve. This is why my delegation brought to your attention for support for our proposal for funding arrangements for interns and JPOs, first through a non-paper, and eventually through the deliberations in this Review Conference, and here we would appeal to you, once again.. Like many innovations, let the OPCW show others that "affordability" should not be the only criterion as we wish to reshape an inclusive future for all.

The Bangladesh delegation aligns itself with the statement made at the Fourth Review Conference by the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Her Excellency Ambassador Haifa Aissami Madah, on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China.

Mr Chairperson,

My delegation considers this Review Conference as a solemn occasion. An opportunity not only to chart out a better tomorrow though our hard work of today, but also a renewal of our pledge for a world free of chemical weapons or chemicals as weapon as we promised in the Chemical Weapons Convention. We are trying to chart our future while looking back to gain insights as well as to bridge the gaps so that we could work as a united body nurtured through a culture of "consensus".

The Review Conference is our common endeavour to make sure that no one, I repeat no one, will ever be a victim of chemical weapons. Just think of Ieper, Halabja, Sardasht, and Ghouta and so many, and see how painfully it evokes the heart piercing images of suffering and death.

This Review Conference is also, therefore, the renewal of our commitment to those victims that they will be the last to experience the horror of chemical weapons. This Review Conference is also our one last attempt to secure a future without chemical weapons and our combined resolve to hold accountable any one that dares to challenge us. This Review Conference is, therefore, all about reminding ourselves that the global norm against chemical weapons is not only a legal agreement, but also a moral and ethical declaration about the dignity of humanity.

No matter who you are, how powerful or miserable you are, keep your hands off the chemical weapons. Before you burn us, we will chase you to hell as a community of 193 States. No exception tendered or granted.

As an original signatory to the Convention, Bangladesh always identifies herself with the aims of the OPCW to achieve a world permanently free of chemical weapons and to contribute to international security and stability, general and complete disarmament, and global economic development. We find that Chemical Weapons Convention is a model disarmament treaty. True to the mantra of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman that “friendship to all, malice to none”. Bangladesh would, therefore, like to see an unfailing response mechanism to address the use of chemical weapons as well as to the threat of chemical terrorism indulging in zero-tolerance to the perpetrators.

Bangladesh believes that full universality of the Convention as well as full and effective implementation of all provisions of the Convention will significantly enhance international peace and security, and technological and economic development of all States Parties. We wholeheartedly welcome Somali Democratic Republic, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of Angola, and the State of Palestine for their ratification or accession to the Convention after the Third Review Conference. We hope that the remaining States not Party to the Convention will join the OPCW at the soonest.

The changing security environment and advancement in science and technology, especially the convergence of chemistry and biology, have certainly added new challenges to the States Parties, particularly the States Parties from developing regions. The Convention must remain as a vanguard all the time against chemical weapons. The Technical Secretariat with its institutional experience and expertise and with the support of developed States Parties should assist the States Parties from the developing regions to implement their national obligations fully and to deal with any threat of chemical terrorism through tailor-made capacity-building programmes. The Secretariat should also promote chemical safety and security against the hostile use of toxic chemicals or preventing chemical accidents through appropriate training programmes, support for enhancing laboratory capabilities, chemical-knowledge promotion and exchange programmes, etc. Promoting peaceful use of chemistry should be a corner stone of the OPCW in the coming days.

We fully support the project of the OPCW to upgrade the OPCW Laboratory into a Centre for Chemistry and Technology. We believe this Centre will significantly enhance the capacity of the OPCW in response to the current threats and scientific and technological developments, and will support capacity building in the States Parties. At this point, my delegation would like to warmly acknowledge the generous contribution of Canada, Ireland, Poland, the European Union and the likes towards preparing the OPCW for a better tomorrow.

We would also like to appeal to a good many other countries, particularly from those who are from the Gulf region and China. Coming from Bangladesh, we remain witnessed to your unbound generosity and, therefore, could not urge you more to extend your generous hand to the good causes pursued by the OPCW and thereby shaping a future free of chemical weapons.

In so many ways, the Chemical Weapons Convention stands conspicuously apart in terms of its achievements in ridding the world from the existing stockpile of other weapons of mass destruction. Let us work together to show to the world that the workings of the OPCW is worth replicating to get the world rid of all weapons of mass destruction. Let us come together, with greater determination, that poverty is what we should eradicate and urge them to use those resources to save lives instead of killing them.

Bangladesh believes that it is paramount for the OPCW to further strengthen partnerships with the relevant regional and international organisations, as well as the chemical industry associations, the scientific community, academia, and civil society organisations to raise our collective voice against chemical weapons and endeavour for our shared goal of a world free of chemical weapons. We would like to see OPCW's umpteenth attempts for innovative programmes like twinning among States Parties, educational outreach, scientific collaborations, etc. for a broader partnership for peace.

As no one quoted me when they made statements, I will take a chance to quote from what I said before. Allow me to re-visit Syria. History tells us that Syria is the aggregate of the great Eastern and Western civilisations that once ruled the world – a cradle of human achievements in law, literature, philosophy, commerce, history, and religion. It is the accumulated legacy of so many powerful and ancient cultures. Therefore, it is worth reiterating our strong support and deep appreciation for the progress achieved in Syria.

Having said all this, we are also aware of the alleged uses of chemical weapon in Syria. More than breach of the Chemical Weapons, these allegations, unless held accountable, will come to haunt us, with what I call the bullets of duality. These bullets are trying not only to split us into a subtle line of “us” and “them”, it pushes us far apart from what we promised in the Convention. This division will only add to the number of victims where humanity is surely to be the perpetual casualty. Therefore, I think it is time for us to listen and ponder to what Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said during his final speech at the UNGA on 20 September 2016. Let me quote:

“Present in this Hall today are representatives of governments that have ignored, facilitated, funded, participated in, or even planned and carried out atrocities inflicted by all sides of the Syria conflict against Syrian civilians.” Unquote.

Therefore, it is perhaps time for us, at least when we deal with the chemical weapon, to bury this dividing “us” and “them” and stop shooting with the “bullets of duality” so that we can work together for a better tomorrow with a good work of today. Let us work together as “human” to restore peace and stability in Syria and across the world.

I ask that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Fourth Review Conference and be posted on the OPCW's website.

I thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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