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BELGIUM

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN LEPAGE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BELGIUM 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,

Thank you for giving me the floor and for this opportunity to congratulate you, Ambassador Vasquez Gomez, on your election as Chairperson of the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Fourth Review Conference”).

Belgium aligns itself with the position expressed by Mr Jacek Bylica, Special Envoy for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, on behalf of the European Union.

In a national capacity, I should like to make the following remarks which are of particular importance to Belgium.

First, we face a challenge ahead, for the world today indeed is not, and is no longer, as it was during the Third Review Conference, and new developments, both positive and negative, must be taken into account by our Fourth Review Conference. Belgium therefore is of the view that the final outcome document for this Review Conference should contain a clear reference to the repeated violation, by both State and non-State actors, of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”). We know that this issue divides the States Parties, but the Convention has a very specific objective: an end to the use of chemical weapons. This objective must take precedence over all other considerations, though we strongly hope for a return to consensus.

Next, we must take into account the new reality and adapt our means to deal with it. In this respect, Belgium welcomes the decisions that have been taken, legitimately and by a comfortable majority of the States Parties, to give the OPCW Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) the power to identify responsibilities and to give the Director-General the means to carry out this task.

This new reality also prompts us to reconsider the methodology of the verification regime, to make it more effective and more targeted. The effectiveness of the verification regime is measured not by the number of inspections, but rather by the ability to trace anomalies. The implementation of all available instruments, including the use of public information sources,



should allow us to move towards a verification strategy that is based on the calculation of risks. The capacity to collect and to manage information must be improved. In this context, Belgium welcomes the proposals made by the Director-General in document C-23/DG.16 RC-4/DG.4 (dated 15 November 2018).

The success of the Convention hinges on the commitment of the States Parties and on their ability to respect their obligations. International cooperation and assistance to strengthen capacities are valuable instruments that can serve to promote better national implementation of the Convention. In his report the Director-General has proposed interesting avenues in this regard.

Technology enables progress, but also poses challenges to which the Secretariat must be in a position to respond.

To seize the opportunities and meet the challenges that I have briefly touched upon, Belgium sees a central role to be played by the new centre for chemistry and technology. This project, initiated by the former Director-General Mr Ahmet Üzümcü, will help to strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat to accomplish its inspection and verification duties, to carry out the Organisation's education and outreach activities, and to implement Article XI of the Convention.

Recognising the importance of the new centre for chemistry and technology, Belgium has contributed the sum of 2 million euros to this project. We hope that our contribution will encourage other States Parties to show their generosity. Today we echo the appeal of the Director-General, Mr Fernando Arias, for the broadest possible support, because every contribution, however modest, is an expression of political support for the project to provide the OPCW with the means and tools necessary to achieve the objective of a world free from chemical weapons.

Finally, Mr Chairperson, Belgium supports your efforts aimed at ending the Fourth Review Conference with a result that will represent added value for the Organisation, that will give it a vision for the next five years, and that will underscore the need to counter the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons and to respect the norm, which has been undermined for several months.

I would ask that this statement be considered as an official document of the Fourth Review Conference.

Thank you.

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