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ITALY

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

Madam Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

I wish to commend Ambassador Jana Reinišová from the Czech Republic for her leadership and the successful way in which she has been able, as Chairperson of the Executive Council (“the Council”), to conduct and lead our work.

I would like, also, to express my country’s gratitude to the Director-General, for his comprehensive report delivered in this session of the Council. Italy is pleased to reiterate its full confidence in the OPCW staff’s commitment and professional qualities and in its impartiality in fulfilling the mandate of the Organisation. Furthermore, Italy fully supports the statement provided on behalf of the EU by Ambassador Brandusa Predescu, Permanent Representative of Romania.

I wish to add a few remarks. Once more, the Council is faced with a further repugnant and deplorable case of use of chemical weapons in Syria as certified by the latest report of the OPCW Fact Finding Mission (FFM) concerning the incident in Douma, on 7 April 2018.

We take this opportunity to reiterate, once again, our strong support to the activities of the FFM and its mandate and capacity of establishing in an independent and impartial manner the facts related to the allegations of use of chemical weapons, especially against the backdrop of the dangerous security environment in which its inspectors are called to operate. We are also grateful to all those countries and stakeholders who helped in providing the appropriate security support which finally enabled the report to be carried out.

Italy indeed believes that, in order to prevent and deter further use of chemical weapons by State or non-State actors, it is crucial to continue to identify to the greatest extent feasible individuals, entities, groups, or government authorities who were perpetrators, organisers, sponsors, or otherwise involved in the use of chemical weapons.

It is our moral duty to fight impunity. In this regard let me express our full support of the Director-General’s efforts to put in place arrangements to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria by identifying and reporting all information potentially relevant to the origin of those chemical weapons in the country affected by such use.



As States Parties, we share the common obligation to protect the future credibility and effectiveness of the regime of non-proliferation of chemical weapons. For all these reasons, we reiterate our call on the Syrian Arab Republic to provide full transparency and unconditional cooperation to the OPCW.

With reference to the last OPCW Declaration Assessment Team's report, it continues to be absolutely unacceptable that, despite the efforts of the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat ("the Secretariat"), it is still not possible today to confirm with certainty that Syria's chemical weapons programme has been completely dismantled, and the subsequent threat eliminated.

The Syrian dossier will remain a priority for the Council until the international community is confident that Syria is free of all chemical weapons and fully committed to the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention"). We expect the Syrian Arab Republic to comply with all Council's decisions and call for the resolution of all pending issues and uncertainties regarding the elimination of its chemical weapons programme.

Italy strongly supports the essential role of the OPCW Laboratory for the effectiveness of the verification regime. So, we will continue to provide support to the upgrading of the OPCW Laboratory into a Centre for Chemistry and Technology to keep pace with current threats and scientific and technological developments, as well as to support capacity building in States Parties in an inclusive manner.

Finally, Italy recognises the future challenges that the Organisation has to face to ensure the continuity of knowledge and expertise within the OPCW. In this connection we wish to express our appreciation to the Chairperson's intention to initiate a facilitation on the OPCW tenure policy to which we pledge our support. It is imperative that the Secretariat be allowed the necessary flexibility in retaining critical technical competences that are vital to implement its mandate. Such competences should not be dissipated and the Director-General should be allowed the necessary authority in this regard in cooperation with the Council.

Concerning the joint proposal submitted by the United States of America, Canada, and the Netherlands to add two families of toxic chemicals to Schedule I of the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention, Italy widely support the recommendation made by the Sixty-Second Meeting of the Council because it is of the utmost importance to review and update, as needed, the Convention to address and face the new threats in order to ensure the viability and effectiveness of the Convention. Therefore, we encourage States Parties to support the recommendation. We regret that it was not possible to find a compromise on the Russian proposal on the basis of the Secretariat's assessment.

To conclude, I wish to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Stefano Dell'Aquila of the Italian delegation, for his commendable and fruitful efforts to bring forward the facilitation under Article VII, which came to term on last February and which resulted in further guidance about enhancing national implementation measures. Article VII touch on many others articles of the Convention and remains primordial for the Convention's full implementation.

I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Ninetieth Session of the Council and posted on the OPCW external server.