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**PORTUGAL**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ROSA BATORÉU  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PORTUGAL TO THE OPCW  
AT THE NINETIETH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,  
Mr Director-General,  
Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to start by congratulating Ambassador Jana Reinišová for her excellent work at the helm of this Executive Council (“the Council”), despite the intensive pace and the many challenges put before her. The two special sessions already held this year are good examples of her capacity for moderation and efficient leadership.

A word, also, to acknowledge once again the strategic vision of Ambassador Fernando Arias: Since his inauguration as Director-General, he has demonstrated the high qualities needed to promote the necessary convergence in an era in which the OPCW is confronted with an increasing number of obstacles and threats to the compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”).

And finally, one last word to wish the new Deputy Director-General, Ambassador Odette Melono of Cameroon, a gratifying and successful tenure.

Portugal fully endorses the statement made this morning by the Ambassador of Romania on behalf of the European Union. In addition, I would like to add a few considerations on my national capacity.

Firstly, on the implementation of the Decision adopted at the Special Conference of the States Parties in June 2018 (entitled "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use") it is Portugal’s belief that the completion of the mechanism for identifying perpetrators of chemical attacks, in Syria as well as in any other country, must be a common priority for this Organisation.

We take note that the Investigation and Identification Team is being established at good speed and that further preparations are under way to meet the requirements of this important Decision. This must be seen as an essential pillar to achieve the mandate of the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) in upholding the Convention which all States Parties have subscribed to.



In connection with this, let me emphasise, as did Ambassador Predescu, the outstanding technical work, the professionalism, the independence, and the indisputable impartiality of the Secretariat of the OPCW, and its continued readiness to support States Parties and address their requests and needs.

I would like to highlight, in this respect, the activities of the Fact-Finding Mission for Syria, and in particular the recent presentation of the results of the investigation into the attack in Douma last year. The report published on 1 March recognises that there are reasonable grounds that the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon took place in Syria, causing death to dozens of people. The conclusions of this mission contain fundamental elements to proceed with the identification of those responsible for such an atrocity, so that no future repetitions may occur.

The Convention has been systematically violated in recent years and we must continue to protect it if we wish to eliminate the chemical weapons threat once and for all. But not only that: it is also crucial to strengthen the Convention to ensure that it remains up to date. At the end of last year, an important process was initiated to amend the Schedule 1 list of chemicals. I believe that everyone recognises that this process is indispensable in view of the emergence of new toxic agents. It is a task that requires technical consensus, but also the political responsibility of all States Parties.

I would like to conclude with a comment on the issue of the tenure policy, whose adaptation we have been debating for several months now. Keeping in mind the conclusions of the report published last October, and the substantive discussions held afterwards in the running up to the Fourth Review Conference, Portugal fully agrees with the need to revive this debate. We believe that this is one of the areas where there is a high degree of convergence between States Parties and where it will be possible to reach a consensual decision until the November Conference. Therefore, we support the idea of initiating a facilitation.

I would kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Council and published on the website of the Organisation.

Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson.

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