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**Statement by  
Ambassador Venu Rajamony,  
Permanent Representative of India to the  
OPCW  
at the 91<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Council,  
09<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Mr. Director General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, Mr. Chairperson, permit me to extend to you, on behalf of my delegation and on my personal behalf, heartiest felicitations on assuming the Chair of the Executive Council. I am sure that the session will be guided to a smooth and successful conclusion under your able leadership. I assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation during this session and during your entire tenure.

I thank the Director General for his comprehensive statement and commend the efforts of the Secretariat under his leadership towards the implementation of the Convention. I welcome the new Vice-Chairpersons as well as thank them for their reports on the activities conducted under their respective clusters of issues.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of NAM States Parties to the CWC and China.

Mr. Chairperson,

India was happy to host, under the OPCW National Authority Mentorship/Partnership Programme a delegation from Afghanistan in New

Delhi from April 29 to May 03, 2019. The Afghan delegation held extensive discussions with officials of our National Authority on India's experience of national implementation under Article VII of the CWC. Indian officials familiarized the Afghan delegation with the facilities, tools, and information provided by the OPCW in support of national implementation and on how to structure national legislation to deal with challenges relating to toxic chemicals and the threat posed by the non-state actors. My government is happy to continue to support Afghanistan in whatever manner possible in its national implementation efforts. We also stand ready to mentor other countries in a similar manner, if there is such interest.

In support of the OPCW's efforts to promote peaceful uses of chemical technology, India also organised in Hyderabad an Analytical Skills Development Course from December 3 to 14, 2018. One of our premier scientific institutions, the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology conducted this course on behalf of the OPCW and imparted knowledge about analytical techniques for the detection, identification and extraction of CWC related chemicals in environmental samples. Representatives of 19 countries participated in this programme. India is happy to continue to contribute towards such capacity-building and other activities for the promotion of peaceful uses of chemistry across the world.

Mr. Chairperson,

With 98% of the global population living under the protection of the Convention and more than 97% of chemical weapon stockpiles declared by possessor states eliminated, we are close to achieving the objective of universal adherence to the CWC. We call upon remaining States that are not Parties to the Convention to consider acceding to the CWC at the earliest. We also hope all remaining declared chemical weapons stockpiles will be soon destroyed.

The OPCW motto evocatively encapsulates the philosophy of the Convention as well as our shared goal- “working together for a world free of chemical weapons”. The OPCW has achieved much success in moving towards the goal of a world free of chemical weapons and the threat of their use. There, however, remains much more to be achieved. We must prepare ourselves to address the new challenges that continue to emerge in the ever-changing global environment, including the increased threat of use of chemical weapons by non-state actors, discovery of new toxic chemicals, easy access to raw materials and technical knowhow as well as advancements in deployment and dissemination techniques.

The proposals to add new toxic chemicals to the Annex on Chemicals of the CWC provided a valuable opportunity to take important steps towards addressing some of the new challenges. We call upon the sponsors of different

proposals in this regard to work together and arrive at a consensus before the upcoming CSP in November 2019.

My delegation fully shares the increasing concern over allegations and incidents of use of chemical weapons, including by terrorist groups emerging from different parts of the world. Any allegation of use of chemical weapons must be investigated thoroughly, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the CWC, to arrive at evidence-based conclusions.

Mr. Chairperson,

My delegation takes note of the continuing involvement of OPCW in the Syrian Arab Republic, including through the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Fact Finding Mission (FFM). We hope consultations between the Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic will continue and result in expeditious resolution of all outstanding issues.

We note the Report of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) of dated March 01, 2019 regarding the incident of alleged use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in Douma on 7 April 2018. Some delegations have raised questions regarding the conclusions drawn in the Report. It is also unfortunate that an OPCW internal document related to the FFM investigation was leaked. We note the DG has launched an investigation into the matter. While we await the Report, we urge all States Parties and the Secretariat to work together to ensure that the integrity of the OPCW as an impartial institution is preserved.

Mr. Chairperson,

Continuing on the subject of Syria, permit me to draw the attention of this Council to the current stalemate over the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). My delegation had voted against the Resolution in the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of States Parties by which the IIT has been established. The reasons we voted against this Resolution were clearly spelt out in our Explanation on Vote at that time and have been reiterated since in previous sessions of the EC. In our Statement to the 90th Session of the EC in March 2019, we expressed the view that there is merit in exploring ways to ensure that concerns on the Attribution Mechanism shared by a large number of States Parties are addressed and the principles of the Convention are upheld. Let me on this occasion reiterate the need for States to engage in a constructive dialogue on this issue and strive to find common ground. Let me also add that as a creation of the CSP, the IIT must at all times remain accountable to the EC and function in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. I reiterate, in this context, the need to restore the finely crafted balance in the Convention, which the decision on Attribution Mechanism has adversely impacted upon.

Mr. Chairperson,

My delegation regrets that despite several rounds of consultations and tireless efforts of the Co-facilitators, Ambassador of Indonesia, I Gusti A.

Wesaka Puja and Ambassador of El Salvador, Agustín Vásquez Gómez, we have been unable to arrive at an agreement on the establishment of an Open Ended Working Group to identify and prioritise the implementation of items on which consensus is achievable among States parties. We reiterate support for the establishment of such a group and call for continued discussions on the subject.

Mr. Chairperson,

India has always emphasized the importance of consensus and the need for all decisions to be taken by the States Parties in consultation with each other. The only way forward is through constructive engagement, dialogue, and unity of purpose. India remains willing and open for discussions with States Parties to find ways and means to strengthen the Convention and its effective implementation, within the framework of the Convention.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairperson, I request that this Statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the OPCW's public website.

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