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**Executive Council**

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**FINLAND**

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION  
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PÄIVI KAUKORANTA  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FINLAND TO THE OPCW  
AT THE NINETY-FIRST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,  
Mr Director-General,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The Candidate Countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Turkey, the potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries Iceland and Norway, members of the EEA (European Economic Area), as well as Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine align themselves with this statement. Andorra, Monaco, and San Marino also associate themselves with this statement.

The European Union pays tribute to Ambassador Jana Reinišová from the Czech Republic for her efficient and professional chairing of the Executive Council (“the Council”) of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) during the last 12 months. We would like to thank her for her dedication and wish her all the best in the new duties in Prague. The EU warmly welcomes the new Chairperson, Ambassador Andrea Perugini, at the helm of the Council. We thank him for his availability and willingness to assume this responsibility and assure him of our full support in steering the work of the Council in the months to come.

The European Union considers the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) as a key instrument of the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. The recent use of chemical weapons shows that the prohibition and global non-use norm of these weapons is under threat. The international community is at a crossroads and decisive action is needed to ensure the integrity and full compliance with the Convention. Preventing impunity and re-emergence of chemical weapons must be at the heart of our endeavours.

In order to achieve this, political will and financial resources are needed. We urge all States Parties to contribute to this common effort. For its part, the European Union has considerably increased its voluntary financial contribution in support of the OPCW activities. The European Union Council of Ministers on 1 April this year decided to contribute EUR 11.6 million during the next 3 years. This voluntary contribution is used, for example, to finance the establishment of



the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology as well as the development of national capacities of States Parties. With this new decision, the total voluntary contribution from the European Union amounts to EUR 57 million since 2004.

The implementing body of the Convention, the OPCW, needs to have a solid financial base and a tailor-made professional structure. The EU considers that the Draft Programme and Budget for 2020 is a firm and solid basis for the upcoming discussions on how to tackle the manifold tasks and challenges ahead the OPCW Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) is facing. As regards the human resources, we thank the OPCW Secretariat for its non-paper on ensuring diverse and qualified workforce, which provide useful elements for discussion amongst the States Parties. The EU considers that the Director-General needs to have some degree of flexibility both to attract new expertise as well as to retain some specialised knowledge for its effective long-term functioning. The EU encourages the Director-General’s efforts to ensure a more diverse and representative Secretariat, as well as strengthening, training, and knowledge management in order to sustain expertise.

We have also taken note of the Proposal by the NAM countries and China for the establishment of an Open-Ended Working Group. The European Union believes that the framework for further deliberations regarding guidance for the work of the OPCW should be future-oriented against the backdrop of the declaration initiated by France and signed by 57 States Parties at the conclusion of the Fourth Review Conference. In that context, the European Union supported the setting-up of a facilitation in the Ninetieth Session of the Council. We thank the Co-facilitators H.E. Ambassador Puja of Indonesia and H.E. Ambassador Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador for their constructive approach and inclusive consultations. We look forward to their reporting to the Council with a view to identifying a way forward.

The European Union reiterates that any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances is unacceptable. Those responsible for the use of CW should be held accountable. The adoption of the Decision "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use" (C-SS-4/DEC.3, dated 27 June 2018) by the Fourth Special Conference of the States Parties in June last year was a crucial step to that effect. We commend the Secretariat for the progress in implementing this tasking and the establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) and welcome the most recent IIT report (EC-91/S/3, dated 28 June 2019) on progress made to date. We look forward to the IIT’s first report issuing, which will be an important step towards identifying those responsible for chemical weapons use in Syria.

The European Union has taken note of the Director-General’s reports regarding progress in the elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme. We reiterate our strong support for the important work of the Fact Finding Mission (FFM) and the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). We stress once again our full trust in the professionalism, impartiality and objectivity of the findings of the FFM Reports, including regarding the incident of alleged use of a toxic chemical as a weapon in Douma (S/1731/2019, dated 1 March 2019).

The European Union expresses great concern at the Syrian Arab Republic’s continued breach of its obligations as a State Party to the Convention due to its failure to provide a complete Declaration and to destroy all of its chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities. This is evidenced by the reports of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism and by a number of open issues in the reports of the DAT. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat as required under the Convention.

To finalise, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the professionalism and work of the Secretariat under the leadership of its Director-General Fernando Arias. We have full confidence in the capacity of the Secretariat to implement the decisions taken and tasks given by the States Parties. We reiterate our firm support for the TS efforts to effectively implement the Convention.

I would kindly ask you, Mr Chairperson, to register this statement as an official document of the Ninety-First Session of the Council and post it on the OPCW External Server and public website.

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