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SWEDEN

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ANNIKA MARKOVIC
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF SWEDEN TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-FIRST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Thank you, Mr Chair,

Let me first of all extend a warm welcome to you, Ambassador Andrea Perugini, to the Chair of the Executive Council (“the Council”), as well as to those States Parties that joined as new members on 12 May. While Sweden is currently an observer in the Council, you can rest assured of the full support of my delegation as you manage our many-faceted work, under the current challenging circumstances.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome my neighbour Finland as Presidency of the European Union. In addition to the statement delivered by Ambassador Kaukoranta on behalf of the EU, I will add a few remarks in my national capacity.

I am pleased to inform the Council of a further contribution of two million Swedish kronor to the OPCW’s Trust Fund for Syria Missions. This pledge follows Foreign Minister Margot Wallström’s visit to the Director-General in March. It is the fourth such contribution made by Sweden, in order to support the Organisation’s important tasks with regard to the Syrian chemical file. The support may be used to reinforce the Fact-Finding Missions, as well as the work of the Declaration Assessment Team and the Investigation and Identification Team. These contributions reflect the importance that Sweden attaches to the ban on chemical weapons and accountability for chemical weapons use. It is also an expression of Sweden’s continuing confidence in the professionalism and impartiality of the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”), as it discharges its responsibilities pursuant to relevant decisions of the UN Security Council and the Policy-Making Organs.

One year after the momentous decision of the Conference of States Parties to task the OPCW with the identification of perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks, we are pleased that the IIT has now been put in place, and looking forward to its upcoming reports. As States Parties, we must now support the Secretariat as it discharges the important technical assignment we have entrusted to it, and give it the breathing space it requires to do its job.

I would like to thank the Secretariat for its non-paper on ensuring diverse and qualified staff. The paper contains a number of interesting perspectives and proposals. For Sweden, as for all States Parties, it remains particularly important that the Secretariat retains access to experienced inspectors with a proven track record so that the OPCW remains in a position to deal effectively with contingencies involving chemical weapons. We also continue to prioritise gender balance in



senior positions of the Secretariat. While some positive steps have been taken in this regard – and for this I congratulate the Director-General – some work remains to be done before we reach a status that could be considered satisfactory.

With regard to the proposal by NAM and China for an open-ended working group covering a range of issues of common interest to all States Parties, Sweden thinks that such discussions may prove useful as long as we are able to identify issues where we may be able to reach consensus on useful outcomes.

In conclusion, I would like to inform States Parties of the upcoming thirteenth CBRN protection symposium to be held 24 - 26 September in Malmö to highlight challenges and progress in science and technology relevant to the protection against chemical weapons. This time around, the thematic focus of the symposium has been expanded to include also nuclear and radiological weapons. I am pleased that Director-General Fernando Arias has agreed to be one of the speakers during the opening session.

In conclusion, I would ask that this statement be considered an official document of the Ninety-First Session of the Council and placed on the public website.

Thank you, Mr Chair.