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PAKISTAN

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SHUJJAT ALI RATHORE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PAKISTAN TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-FIRST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,

Let me begin by welcoming you as the new Chairperson of the Executive Council (“the Council”). I am confident that with your experience and known diplomatic skills you will guide this session of the Council to a successful conclusion. I would like to assure you of my delegation’s full support and cooperation.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the States Parties belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

I would like to thank the Director-General for his comprehensive statement reporting on various activities of the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) and reflecting on the substance of our work.

The Director-General’s recent Report on Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme highlights the Secretariat’s continuing engagement with the Syrian authorities. We support the framework of the Structured Dialogue. It is our hope that it would lead to the resolution of all matters considered outstanding.

We are all united in our quest to ensure abiding relevance of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”). The spirit of cooperation amongst States Parties and the unity of purpose in getting rid of the chemical weapons from the world has set new precedents that are indeed worth emulating in disarmament. With 97 percent of the declared category 1 chemical weapons having been verifiably destroyed, the Convention is closer to registering an exceptional milestone in the history of disarmament. On destruction of the remaining declared stockpiles, we appreciate the commitment of the United States of America to remain on track to meet their target completion date of September 2023. With the accession of the State of Palestine to the Convention last year, 193 States Parties are members of this Convention today. Complete universality remains one of the key goals for the States Parties for which renewed efforts should be made.

There are of course other issues of even more immediate concern where we need to work in a cohesive and cooperative manner. We all are aware of the current disagreements and their



consequences. Primarily these are rooted in some decisions that were adopted while setting aside the longstanding tradition of consensus in the OPCW. The genesis of the so called Attribution Mechanism has hardly been conducive to the deliberations in the Council. With the key players and those most relevant to the functioning of the Attribution Mechanism having rejected the rationale for its creation, it is now most unlikely that this mechanism will be able to carry out its work in a manner that its strongest proponents had envisaged. This now creates another uncertain situation. Any work carried out without the tools and data that is a prerequisite for the work of the attribution mechanism can only lead to highly subjective outcomes. We wonder what benefit this brings to the Convention and this Organisation. Time and developments re-confirm our reservations regarding imposing on the OPCW responsibilities that otherwise belong to separate duly constituted international mechanisms; in this case, the UNSC. Besides, it is crucial to respect the boundaries within which the Convention is meant to operate.

Another matter casting a shadow on the work and reputation of the Organisation relates to recent controversy that has also appeared in the international media. I am referring to the Fact-Finding Mission's report and conclusions regarding Douma incident. As a State Party, we have full confidence in the integrity and professionalism of the OPCW missions. At the same time, there is no denying the complexity of the investigation conducted in the context of the Douma incident. When an investigation is so full of technical and political ramifications, the desire of the States Parties for transparency is justified. We believe such flexibility in the approach would have been an expedient and not the norm as regards the autonomy that must be given to OPCW teams carrying out such work. In short, we believe that the matter could have been and could still be resolved through informal processes that are to the satisfaction of all concerned.

The inability of the Fourth Review Conference to produce a consensus document was an exception considering the successes of the previous three Review Conferences. The determination of the States Parties to build on the constructive exchanges that took place during the Conference of the States Parties is commendable. This would amount to building on the efforts of Ambassador Puja of Indonesia and Ambassador Gómez of El Salvador who worked tirelessly with the States Parties. It was in this positive spirit that we came to an agreement to move ahead on issues where consensus seemed close at hand and especially in view of the challenges that our organization faces. In this regard, the proposal of NAM States Parties and China for the establishment of an Open-Ended Working Group will be a step in the right direction. I believe we are closer to finding a compromise. I urge the Council members to reach an agreement during this session of the Council.

We recognise the importance of all the provisions of the Convention. This is self-evident. Of equal relevance is the underlying basis that brings the diversity of our membership together through international cooperation and assistance activities. We will continue to stress that the Convention is implemented in the manner that promotes the economic and technological interests of all States Parties. Pakistan believes that continuing investment in this field will cement the interests of a large number of States Parties in the Convention in the years to come.

Pakistan has whole-heartedly supported the initiative for upgrading the OPCW Lab to Centre for Chemistry and Technology. At a time of rapid advances in science and technology the Chemtech Centre will enable the OPCW to exploit cutting-edge science for purposes of improving its verification regime. At the same time, it promises to bring benefits to the States

Parties through research projects and capacity building programmes. I am pleased to say that in response to the Director-General's appeal, my government has decided to make a financial contribution for the project.

Without minimising the importance of the issues that the Organisation faces and which this Council is expected to grapple with, I would like to conclude on an optimistic note. In this Organisation, we have all stood together through difficult times in order to uphold the norms of the Convention. In pursuit of this objective, we have achieved successes that are unprecedented in the field of disarmament. By restoring our traditions of cooperation and consensus we can continue to remain collectively true to the spirit of the Convention and the aims for which this Organisation was created.

I thank you all.

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