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SWITZERLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR HEINZ WALKER-NEDERKOORN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SWITZERLAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-SECOND SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

At the outset, let me thank the Director-General for his statement and assure him of the full support and cooperation of the Swiss Delegation.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) must remain relevant in an evolving context and in light of technological developments. A key challenge in this regard is the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons. To this end, Switzerland is convinced that it is necessary to address the issue of the aerosolised use of central nervous system (CNS)-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes.

We have been voicing our concern about this issue for many years. And our concern is not only shared by one or two countries. It is a concern shared by the scientific community, civil society, and over 40 States Parties to this Organisation. We fear that further inaction on this important issue risks undermining the object and purpose of the Convention.

Therefore, Australia, Switzerland, and the United States have initiated a process with the aim of working towards two decisions to be considered by the Executive Council (“the Council”) and the Conference of the States Parties (“the Conference”) respectively that reflect our concerns and allow for a policy discussion to take place.

We will introduce a draft Council decision under “Any other business” later this week for the purpose of starting a discussion on the basis of this draft with the broader membership of the OPCW, eventually leading to an adoption at the Conference in 2020. This decision re-affirms our understanding on the application of the Convention – namely, that the aerosolised use of CNS-acting chemicals is inconsistent with law enforcement purposes as a “purpose not prohibited” under the Convention. It does not create new legal obligations for States Parties or impose any restrictions on legitimate medical uses. We call on all States Parties to support us in our endeavour and stand ready to discuss any issues related to it. I would also like to take the opportunity to invite you to our side event on the issue on Thursday 10 October at 1 p.m.

The long-standing prohibition of chemical weapons has been challenged in recent years by their repeated use in the Syrian Arab Republic and elsewhere. Switzerland condemns in the



strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons by anyone. Such acts constitute a serious violation of international law and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

The Swiss Government supported the decision to establish a mechanism within the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons that serves to identify the origin of chemical weapons used as well as the parties responsible for it. We welcome the progress achieved in setting up the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). In order to ensure its effectiveness, we must continue to support the OPCW, both politically and financially. Switzerland stands fully behind the IIT's mandate and has absolutely no doubt about the legality and legitimacy of the decision. We expressed our support by making a voluntary financial contribution to the IIT earlier this year. Likewise, we financially supported the lessons learned process of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism's (JIM) second phase.

Switzerland has taken note of the latest report of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and encourages the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate in a constructive manner with the Technical Secretariat ("the Secretariat") in order to resolve the outstanding issues. I wish to reiterate Switzerland's full confidence in the work and findings of the Secretariat, which has consistently conducted its missions in the context of the FFM, the DAT, and the JIM in a professional and impartial way, and in full respect of its mandate.

Thank you, Mr Chair.

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