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NEW ZEALAND

**STATEMENT BY MS ERIN MORRISS DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-SECOND SESSION
OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

The OPCW has a full agenda as it heads towards the Conference of the States Parties (“the Conference”) in November. We thank the Director-General, the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”), and a number of delegations here for their extensive work on different initiatives to further strengthen and modernise the Organisation.

Of particular note, we welcome the work undertaken throughout the course of this year by Ambassador Puja (of Indonesia) and Ambassador Gómez (of El Salvador) through the ongoing facilitation process on tenure policy and related human resources issues. We also welcome the Chair’s proposal on “enhancing coordination and addressing issues on which progress is sought”. We believe this proposal will provide a sensible way forward, ensuring that progress can be made on certain topics that states parties have identified as important, while doing so, as much as possible, within the existing facilitation framework.

The two sets of technical change proposals (to update Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to the Chemical Weapons Convention), which are currently before the OPCW, can also serve as an important means of further strengthening the Chemical Weapons Convention. New Zealand has already indicated its support for the Joint Proposal submitted by Canada, the Netherlands, and the United States. We were encouraged by the Russian Federation’s recent announcement regarding modifications to its technical change proposal, which would ensure its alignment with the Secretariat’s previous assessment and advice. This would be a welcome development and would – in our view – hopefully open the way towards both proposals being adopted by consensus at the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference in November.

We also welcome the decision presented by Australia, Switzerland, and the United States relating to the use of aerosolised central nervous system acting chemicals. We share the concerns expressed by numerous States Parties regarding the serious health and safety risks posed by such chemicals, and the possibility of their deliberate misuse. We look forward to States Parties engaging constructively on this important topic and we are pleased to co-sponsor this draft decision.

States Parties need to ensure that the OPCW is well supported and resourced to carry out its work programme. New Zealand believes that the 2020 Draft Programme and Budget is



reasonable and justified. We hope that States Parties can work together constructively to ensure the draft budget is submitted to the Conference at this Executive Council. The proposed budget will ensure the OPCW can continue to carry out its important work in an effective manner.

New Zealand is proud to support the OPCW across the full spectrum of its work. To this end, New Zealand was pleased to announce a financial contribution of €100,000 towards the OPCW's new Centre for Chemistry and Technology. The new ChemTech Centre will play an important role in strengthening the OPCW's ability to address chemical weapons threats, boost its investigative capability, and enhance capacity building activities. We are pleased that our contribution will help support the construction phase of the new Centre, and wish the OPCW all the best with this important project.

Turning to the ongoing use of chemical weapons in Syria: we thank the Secretariat for its recent update on the different elements of the Syria file. In particular, we once again note New Zealand's concerns regarding the significant number of issues relating to Syria's declaration which remain unresolved. We hope that the Syrian Government will cooperate fully, and in good faith, to ensure that the Declarations Assessment Team can resolve these issues during its next visit. This is well overdue.

Finally, New Zealand also wishes to register our concerns regarding the accreditation process for NGOs to attend the 2019 Conference. The Conference should be open and inclusive events. The 2013 Review Conference agreed to open the Conference to civil society groups, yet this decision has been undermined by a small number of States Parties, who have objected to the participation of certain NGOs in recent years. This is counter-productive, and contrary to the OPCW's values of openness and transparency. The OPCW needs the support of a wide range of stakeholders in order to undertake its important work, and we strongly encourage further consultations by the General Committee to resolve this issue.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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