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**STATEMENT BY HER EXCELLENCY SHEILA SEALY MONTEITH,
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ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS,
TO THE TWENTY-FOURTH CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES
TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
27 NOVEMBER 2019**

Mr. Chairman, Director General, Excellencies

Mr. Chairman,

First, let me congratulate you, on behalf of the Government of Jamaica, on your appointment as chairperson of the Twenty-fourth Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. You can count on our support in your efforts to ensure the efficient and constructive management of the work of this session. Jamaica also wishes to thank His Excellency Yun-young Lee of the Republic of Korea for his able leadership throughout the Twenty-third session.

Let me also seize this opportunity to commend the Director-General and his team for their work to carry out the objectives of the Organisation. I would like to salute, in particular, the successful efforts in promoting gender-equality within the Technical Secretariat.

Since ratifying the Convention in 2000, Jamaica has remained firmly committed to its principles and objectives and to its full and effective

implementation. We recognise the key contribution of the Convention to the promotion of international peace and security, as well as its potential in advancing the economic and technological development of States Parties. Jamaica is determined to put in place, as soon as possible, comprehensive legislation to prevent and address breaches of the Convention and to better respond to chemical emergencies.

The maximum effectiveness of the Convention is tied to its universality. My country, therefore, calls on States that have not yet done so to ratify it without further delay. At the same time, Jamaica urges all States Parties to comply with their obligations under the Convention, and to refrain from the use of chemical weapons, particularly against civilian populations. We also encourage States Parties to continue to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat towards the total elimination of stockpiles within their control or for which they are responsible. In this context, Jamaica commends the commitment demonstrated by China and Japan to achieving the destruction of abandoned stockpiles in the Jilin province.

Mr. Chairman,

In recent history, chemical weapons have destroyed the lives of countless victims, to our deep regret. It is difficult to ignore the images of suffering and death with which we have become all too familiar. Jamaica maintains that the use of weapons of mass destruction, particularly against innocent civilians, is an abomination, as it negatively impacts lives, family units, communities and livelihoods. In this context, the use of chemical weapons must never be tolerated. For this reason, Jamaica supports the work of the

Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) and looks forward to its first report. The work of the IIT will allow us to make progress in finally bringing justice to those who have been victims of chemical weapons attacks in Syria.

Mr. Chairman,

Since its entry into force, the achievements of the Convention have been many, including the destruction of 98 percent of declared stockpiles, which constitute a remarkable contribution to global peace and security. New threats, including from unscheduled chemicals, as well as chemical terrorism, demand that States Parties continue to demonstrate the mutual cooperation that has come to characterise the OPCW. It will also require vigilance and the willingness and flexibility to amend the Convention, as necessary, to ensure that it remains fit for purpose in an ever-evolving context.

The imperative to cooperate to effectively address new and emerging threats means that the work of the OPCW cannot be held hostage to the level of politicisation that besets so many other disarmament fora. The OPCW must continue to work in a cooperative, non-politicised and transparent manner and in tireless and genuine pursuit of consensus. In a world where multilateralism is increasingly under siege, the OPCW must remain a testament to what is possible through multilateral dialogue and cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

The international cooperation and assistance activities of the Technical Secretariat are worthy of special commendation. States Parties are eligible for a raft of assistance programmes and Jamaica itself has benefitted from the OPCW's internship programme and associate programme, seminars, and other training opportunities. As a Small Island Developing State, Jamaica has experienced its fair share of financial and human resource constraints. This is why we are immensely grateful to have benefitted from the work and support of the Technical Secretariat in, among other things, providing capacity building and protection support and facilitating the efforts of Jamaica and the Caribbean region in implementing their obligations under the Convention. In this context, Jamaica commends the development of the Electronic Declarations Information System (EDIS), which will facilitate State Party reporting by easing the reporting burden, particularly for small and resource-constrained developing countries. Jamaica looks forward to its prompt implementation.

We urge the continued promotion of international cooperation on all four pillars of the Convention, namely disarmament, non-proliferation, assistance and protection, and development of peaceful purposes. We also encourage greater support in helping States Parties to strengthen customs controls and control of transfers of chemical substances, in the promotion of exchange of experts at the regional level, and in improved training for first responders, as well as for laboratory personnel.

It is in this context that Jamaica calls for the adoption of the Programme and Budget for 2020 on a consensual basis, in order to eliminate obstacles to ensuring that the OPCW will have the adequate budgetary provisions to continue its work towards disarmament, as well as its highly valued international cooperation and assistance programmes. Furthermore, Jamaica urges Member States in a position to do so to contribute to the fund to establish the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology, which is expected to scale up the capacity-building support for States Parties.

Mr. Chairman,

The global norm against the use of chemical weapons imposes a moral obligation on both States Parties and non-States Parties to pursue a world where chemical weapons no longer threaten the lives and dignity of citizens anywhere. Jamaica reaffirms its commitment to continue working with other States Parties towards achieving the complete elimination of the scourge of chemical weapons and in protecting the sacred and fundamental right of all human beings to life.

I thank you.