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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**STATEMENT BY MR THOMAS DINANNO
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FOR DEFENCE POLICY, EMERGING THREATS, AND OUTREACH AT THE
TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairman,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished ambassadors and delegates,

In April 2017, President Trump stated, “It is in the vital national security interests of the United States to prevent and deter the spread and use of deadly chemical weapons.” The United States has made it a priority to restore deterrence against the use of chemical weapons and has made clear its national security importance. Last year at the June special session of the Conference of the States Parties and again in November 2018, States Parties made clear with their votes that together we are willing to take action to stop and deter further chemical weapons use.

The United States is encouraged by the overwhelming support of States Parties through the use of their votes and voluntary funding contributions to prevent further chemical weapons use and restore chemical weapons deterrence, including critical voluntary funding to the new OPCW Centre for Technology and Chemistry and to the OPCW’s Syria Trust Fund, which includes funding for the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). If we are to succeed in restoring deterrence against chemical weapons use and driving chemical weapons use to zero, we must continue to support the tireless, brave and noble efforts of the Technical Secretariat.

The United States believes that it is imperative to support new OPCW initiatives; to call out States Parties for their non-compliance; and to push for States Parties to be held accountable for non-compliance. In doing so, we seek to dissuade and prevent other States Parties from violating the Convention.

It is essential to support new initiatives to strengthen the Convention, and the United States is taking active steps to do so. In response to the Salisbury and Amesbury incidents, the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands jointly submitted a proposal (known as the Joint Technical Change Proposal) to add two chemical families to Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention. I call on States Parties to adopt the draft Conference decision by consensus, so that implementation can begin. The United States can also join consensus in the adoption of the Russian set of proposals to add chemicals to the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention. We believe these two proposals can be adopted at this Conference in



parallel, by consensus, with “a single bang of the gavel.” By their addition, further development and use of deadly novichok weapons will be deterred and prevented.

A second initiative that the United States recently has undertaken is not new, but it is necessary. The United States, Australia, Switzerland and 21 additional co-sponsors have spearheaded an initiative to adopt a set of decisions making clear States Parties’ understanding that under the CWC the aerosolised use of CNS-acting chemicals is *inconsistent* with law enforcement as a “purpose not prohibited.” This set of decisions neither imposes new obligations on States Parties nor requires any changes to the Convention; instead, it makes clear States Parties’ understanding that such use is impermissible under the Convention. I call on States Parties who have not yet co-sponsored this initiative to join us and together, we can work to ensure that there is no use of CNS-acting chemicals as chemical weapons.

It is also crucial to call out non-compliance with the Convention to make clear such behavior is not acceptable, and to prevent further malign behaviour. Last year, the United States announced its assessment of Iran’s non-compliance with the Convention in its national statement to the Fourth Review Conference. The United States highlighted its assessment that the Russian Federation violated the Convention when it used a military grade nerve agent in an assassination attempt in the United Kingdom. Further, we remind States Parties that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons systematically and repeatedly against the Syrian people every year since acceding to the Convention. The United States will not allow these violations to go unchallenged.

This year, the United States believes it is important to raise issues regarding Myanmar’s Convention compliance to States Parties’ attention. Based on available information, the United States certifies that Myanmar is in non-compliance with the Convention due to its failure to declare its past chemical weapons program and to destroy its chemicals weapons production facility. The United States assesses Myanmar had a chemical weapons programme in the 1980s that included a sulfur mustard development program and chemical weapons production facility. The United States has serious concerns that a chemical weapons stockpile may remain at Myanmar’s historical chemical weapons facility.

Beginning in February 2019, the United States held bilateral discussions with Myanmar to ensure that the civilian government and its military were aware of United States concerns regarding its past chemical weapons programme. The United States urges Myanmar to declare its past program to the OPCW, remove this potential proliferation issue, and come into compliance with the Convention. Doing so provides an opportunity for Myanmar to deepen international engagement, meet its Convention obligations, and uphold international nonproliferation efforts. The United States stands ready to assist Myanmar in its efforts, including through the provision of technical expertise. We call on others in this room to assist in this effort.

It is essential for all of us to continue to work together, to push for accountability for chemical weapons use. As such, I call on all States Parties to agree to the proposed OPCW 2020 Programme and Budget, which includes the work of the Investigation and Identification Team. This team has been tasked, by States Parties, to “identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.” Once the IIT has finished its work and releases its findings, it will be up to States Parties to review the findings and to take action, both here and at the United Nations.

The United States is proud of what States Parties and the OPCW together have accomplished. I think we all agree there is more to do to move forward to a world free of chemical weapons and to drive chemical weapons use to zero. In this way, we strengthen the Convention.

I request that this statement be considered an official document of the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and posted on the external server and the public website.

Thank you.

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