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REPUBLIC OF KOREA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR YUN-YOUNG LEE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA TO THE OPCW
AT THE TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE
OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere congratulations to you, Ambassador Krassimir Kostov, on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. I am confident that this session of the Conference will prove a great success under your excellent leadership. My delegation assures you of its full support and cooperation for successful outcomes from the Conference.

My appreciation goes also to Director-General Fernando Arias and the staff members of the Technical Secretariat for the reports to this session of the Conference, which are indeed informative and comprehensive. Their professionalism and devotion to our common goal of eliminating chemical weapons are sincerely appreciated.

The OPCW has made tremendous achievements since the entry into force of the Convention in 1997. Around 98% of the global population from 193 States Parties are being protected by the Convention and yet in 2019 it continues to face a growing array of challenges. Amongst the tasks which warrant our immediate action are preventing the re-emergence of the horrendous incidents of chemical weapons use as well as adapting the Convention and the OPCW to enable it to rise to constantly evolving threats.

The decision adopted at the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties in June 2018 was an excellent instance of our concerted efforts to address the challenges before us. This monumental decision, which was adopted in accordance with the established rules of procedure and thus legally binding for all, mandated the OPCW to put in place arrangements to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We appreciate the ongoing efforts of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to investigate the nine priority incidents in an impartial and a professional way. We look forward to the issuing of the first report of the IIT in due course.



The delegation of the Republic of Korea is concerned that the IIT coordinator and other staff members are being denied access to the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, which is essential in ensuring operational effectiveness. All States Parties are legally obliged under Article 7 of the Convention to assist and fully cooperate with the OPCW in the exercise of its functions. In this regard, we would like to urge all States Parties to extend maximum support for the work of the IIT, which is an integral part of the OPCW.

My delegation reaffirms its unwavering support for the valuable work of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to identify the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The FFM has been fulfilling its mission in a transparent, independent, and impartial way. We recognise the past findings of the FFM and look forward to its continued work to the noble end.

We note with concern the report of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) that the Secretariat could not verify that Syria had submitted an accurate and complete declaration. We call upon the Syrian Arab Republic to render its fullest possible cooperation to the DAT and to make utmost efforts to address these pressing outstanding issues.

My delegation is of the view that the draft decision on the Programme and Budget for 2020, which was adopted at the Ninety-Second Session of the Executive Council, is well structured to meet a variety of challenges faced by the Organisation. We note that the Programme and Budget for 2020 is proportionate and justified, seeking to achieve maximum effectiveness within the limits of the zero nominal growth principle. We hope that the current session of the Conference will adopt the draft budget on the table. This will indeed be instrumental in enabling the Organisation to well fulfil its vital missions in 2020.

As chemical weapons threats are constantly evolving, it is more important than ever to reshape the Convention in the face of these new and emerging challenges. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the joint proposal by the United States of America, Canada, and the Netherlands to add two families of chemicals to Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals. Its adoption will help to deter further use of such chemicals for prohibited purposes and indeed contribute to preventing their proliferation.

My delegation would also like to acknowledge the efforts by the Russian Federation to revise its original proposals in accordance with the Secretariat evaluation. In this regard, it is the hope of the Republic of Korea that the current session of the Conference will adopt the two draft decisions by consensus.

The Republic of Korea has been co-sponsoring the joint paper titled “Aerosolisation of Central Nervous System (CNS)-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes” since 2015 when it was first tabled. It is time to take action within the policy-making organs to move forward on this issue. In this regard, the Republic of Korea is glad to support as a co-sponsor the draft decision on Understanding regarding the Aerosolized Use of CNS-acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes. The draft decision is not to restrict the production of CNS-acting chemicals for legitimate medical uses, but to confirm our common understanding that CNS-acting chemicals could be potentially used for prohibited purposes under the guise of law enforcement. My delegation encourages all delegations to support the draft decision in 2020 to address our shared concerns.

My delegation welcomes the final compromise proposal by the Council Chairperson on revitalising the facilitation mechanisms, enhancing coordination, and addressing a wide range of issues we face together. We thank the co-facilitators, Ambassador Wesaka Puja of Indonesia and Ambassador Agustín Gómez of El Salvador, as well as the States Parties and regional groups for their continued efforts to move the consultation process forward. My delegation very much hopes that we will reach consensus at this session of the Conference. We hope that the Organisation will be able to embark on concrete actions to tackle matters of urgency, including improving workforce management and geographic balance.

Since the entry into force of the Convention in 1997, universal adherence to the Convention has been, and continues to be, a top priority for all of us. Firmly believing that universality is a key element in international peace and security, my delegation urges the four States not Party to the Convention to join it as early as possible without any preconditions. We would also like to request that the Secretariat, in coordination with States Parties, continue to shape tailor-made approaches for each of them.

Also, my delegation notes with concern that only 62% of the States Parties have national implementation legislation covering all the initial measures. We express our appreciation to the Secretariat for its ongoing efforts in this regard and encourage it to continue to render its support for the States Parties endeavouring to fulfil their Article VII obligations.

The need for the OPCW to be well ready to adapt to newly emerging challenges is a compelling one. In this connection, the Korean Government has made financial contributions to the future OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology for the last two years. And we are pleased to announce that our Government will continue our contributions again next year. We hope other States Parties who have yet to make a financial commitment will also play their part to this noble end.

The Republic of Korea has also been seeking to play a part in further strengthening international cooperation in the fields of chemical safety and security. In this context, we have been hosting the Seoul Workshop for eight consecutive years with a strong belief that ensuring chemical safety and security in the private sector is another prerequisite for achieving a world free from chemical weapon threats. This year's workshop was held from 29 to 31 October including a table-top exercise on risk assessments. It provided participants from 14 Asian States Parties with invaluable opportunities to learn each country's efforts to enhance chemical safety and security and share best practices.

In closing, I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session of the Conference and be published on the OPCW website and external server.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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