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PHILIPPINES

**STATEMENT BY THE HON. MICHAEL P. ONG
SENIOR DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE
OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson, Director-General, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is my honour to represent the Republic of the Philippines at the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. I congratulate Your Excellency, Ambassador Krassimir Kostov of Bulgaria, on assuming the position as Chair for this year's Conference and assure you of our full support for the work ahead.

I also reiterate my delegation's gratitude to Director-General Fernando Arias and the members of the Technical Secretariat, who continue to tirelessly assist States Parties in their effective implementation of the Convention.

The use of chemical weapons is thought to be a thing of the past. Ever since the entry into force of the Convention, most militaries around the world have abandoned their chemical arsenals. Unfortunately, chemical weapons have not yet completely vanished. In the face of this continuing challenge, the Philippines reaffirms its strong commitment to the non-proliferation and complete elimination of chemical weapons around the world; the utilisation of chemistry for peaceful uses, particularly in support of the development goals of a developing country such as the Philippines; and, the sharing of information, expert skills and capacity-building assistance to strengthen the capability, awareness and preparedness of our government agencies and chemical industries to effectively respond to the challenges and opportunities posed by the rapid technology advancements in the field.

I am here today representing the Chair of the Philippines' Anti-Terrorism Council, which is the lead agency in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and the national coordinating body for liaising with the OPCW and other States Parties to the Convention.

I also represent the Chair of the National Security Council-Strategic Trade Management Committee, the unit mandated to implement Republic Act No. 10697 of 2015, also known as the Strategic Trade Management Act, or STMA. The STMA was put in place to regulate the export, import, transit and transshipment, re-export and re-assignment of strategic goods, software and technology, and the provision of related services to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), including chemical weapons. The STMA



demonstrates the Philippines' commitment to effectively implement its obligations to eradicate the use and counter the proliferation of such WMDs.

In October 2019, the Philippines' Strategic Trade Management Office (STMA), the agency mandated to coordinate the implementation of the STMA, began the registration of stakeholders— exporters, importers and brokers of strategic goods—into a consolidated registry. We also introduced a phased implementation scheme for these stakeholders to properly comply with the requirements under the STMA.

Under the STMA, strategic goods refer to the items, software and technology that, for security reasons or due to international agreements, are considered to be of such military importance that their export is either prohibited altogether or subject to specific conditions. Strategic goods are listed under the National Strategic Goods List, which includes military goods, dual use goods, and nationally controlled goods.

These efforts reflect the whole-of-government approach where government and industry must work together to ensure international and regional peace and security.

The Philippines firmly believes that only through constructive dialogue and engagement can we achieve common goals. It is in this spirit that we commend the work of the Non-Aligned Movement members that are States Parties to the Convention and China, under the previous leadership of Ambassador Haifa Aissami Madah of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela as Chairperson, and continued now under the chairmanship of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Philippines benefits from a strong OPCW, and an OPCW that remains focused on the horizons beyond 2023, when chemical weapons stockpiles are deemed to have been completely eliminated as determined by the Convention. From the second half of 2018 until the first half of 2019, 31 Filipino experts had successfully completed various training programs organized and funded by the OPCW. These experts come from a range of specializations and offices, namely, the Armed Forces of the Philippines; Philippine Navy; Institute for Tropical Medicine; Bureau of Fire Protection; Occupational Safety and Health Center; the Strategic Trade Management Office; Department of Science and Technology; Environmental Management Bureau; Department of National Defense; Anti-Terrorism Council-Program Management Center; academia, and chemical industry partners. The knowledge, skills and network gained from positive engagements such as these allow the Philippines to proactively respond to chemical weapons-related incidents that may occur within and beyond our national borders.

A number of challenges remain for the Philippines, including further enhancing the management of its borders, which requires increased attention from our national law enforcement agencies and policy-making bodies. Addressing outstanding issues would ensure that the country can prevent weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical weapons, and is able to maintain peace and pursue unimpeded growth.

I would like to underscore the importance of multilateral action, as it reinforces what we do nationally. As universality is crucial to a convention's success, the Philippines calls on States who have yet to sign or ratify the Convention to do so without delay. A robust multilateral effort that at the same time respects the sovereignty of States is crucial to sustaining our commitment to the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention.

Finally, I request that this statement be made an official document of the Conference.

Salamat po. Thank you.

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