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AUSTRIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR HEIDEMARIA GÜRER
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
TO THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-THIRD SESSION OF
THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Director-General,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Austria is fully aligned with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by the Ambassador of Croatia, Dubravka Marković. I would nevertheless like to make a few additional remarks in our national capacity.

As an incoming member of the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”), allow me to thank the States Parties of the OPCW for their trust. Austria is fully committed to the important work of the OPCW, and we are looking forward to playing an active role in the Council from May onwards. Let me also use this opportunity to thank you, Mr Chairperson, for so skillfully guiding the work of the Council, as well as to thank the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their hard work and commitment.

At the same time, let me also use this opportunity to thank the Director-General for his work, professionalism, as well as his endeavour to reach a balanced approach in often challenging times for our Organisation, by fulfilling his mandate in strict compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. We also applaud the positive developments achieved so far with regard to gender balance, and hope that in future the underrepresentation of countries will also be tackled.

It is no secret that we are facing immense challenges in our common fight against chemical weapons. While we continue to witness very different views on how to fight these horrendous weapons, the fact that the Conference of the States Parties was able to unanimously adopt the decision to amend Schedule 1 shows that progress is indeed possible. However, we cannot stop here; more needs to be done. It is for this reason that Austria is proud to announce that we are fully supportive of the draft decision presented by Australia, Switzerland and the United States of America concerning the understanding regarding the aerosolised use of central nervous system-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes.



A rules-based international order including accountability is a cornerstone of Austria's foreign policy. Austria highly values the expertise of the OPCW in the field of chemical disarmament as well as its proven neutrality. We therefore fully support the important work of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, and we look forward to the IIT Report. The work of the IIT is proof that the international community does not tolerate the use of chemical weapons.

In closing, let me also thank Ambassadors Gómez and Puja for their hard work in the Facilitation on Organisational Governance issues. The constructive discussions have shown where progress could be achieved in order to keep the OPCW fit for purpose. We now look forward to seeing how this can be translated into concrete actions.

I would kindly ask you, Mr Chairperson, to consider this statement as an official document of the Ninety-Third Session of the Executive Council and to post it on both the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you.

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