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**REPUBLIC OF KOREA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR YEONDOO JEONG PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA TO THE OPCW  
AT THE NINETY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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

Let me begin by warmly welcoming the assumption of the post of Chairperson of the Executive Council by Ambassador Agustin Vasquez Gomez of El Salvador. You are taking on the demanding task of guiding us through the most challenging times. Yet, I have every confidence that this session of the Executive Council will indeed yield tangible outcomes under your excellent leadership. And I assure you of my delegation's full support.

I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Ambassador Andrea Perugini of Italy for successfully shepherding us during the past year. His able leadership—and indeed his friendship—have been invaluable in moving forward on a whole array of issues, not least the first-ever changes to the Annex on Chemicals as well as governance issues.

Director-General Fernando Arias and all the staff of the Technical Secretariat are also exemplary for their untiring determination to fulfil their daunting missions even in the midst of the challenges posed by COVID-19. Their professionalism and devotion are impressive and inspiring.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been placing an unprecedented strain on the entire world – and the work of the OPCW is no exception. The global health crisis has been negatively affecting its activities, making the full implementation of the planned OPCW programmes in 2020 impossible. We also note with particular concern that all missions of the Technical Secretariat in the Syrian Arab Republic have been postponed until further notice.

We firmly believe that core mandates such as verification and inspections should continue to be fulfilled as much as they can be. In this regard, we express our sincere appreciation to the Technical Secretariat for making every effort to minimise to the extent possible the impact of COVID-19. We welcome that the Director-General has established an internal Task Force, and that the Technical Secretariat is updating the States Parties on its mitigation measures on a regular basis.



My delegation calls for the Technical Secretariat to continue to make such efforts to ensure business continuity without compromising the health or safety of staff members. We also encourage the Technical Secretariat to employ as many digital tools as possible as alternative means to continue to engage States Parties and other stakeholders.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the publication on 8 April of the first report of the IIT. We note with grave concern its conclusions that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force used sarin and chlorine as chemical weapons in Ltamenah on three different occasions—24, 25, and 30 March 2017.

My delegation extends its appreciation to IIT Coordinator Santiago Onate and other members of the IIT who have fulfilled daunting tasks in an independent, impartial, and professional way. They are to be all the more commended for producing a quality report in the face of challenging circumstances in which Syria refuses access to information and locations relevant to the investigation.

The Republic of Korea condemns in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons—anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances. All those responsible for chemical weapons use must be held accountable for their acts. The identified perpetrators of the three Ltamenah incidents can be no exception.

It is incumbent upon the policy-making organs of the OPCW to take decisive action against this clear violation of norms against chemical weapons use. Inaction on the part of the Organisation will only serve to embolden future perpetrators of chemical weapons. The Executive Council is required, pursuant to Article VIII of the Convention, to take all necessary measures to address the situation. My delegation hopes that this session of the Executive Council will yield tangible results in terms of addressing this matter and we reiterate our full support for the work of the Executive Council.

My delegation reiterates its continued support for the valuable work of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to establish the facts regarding allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The FFM has been carrying out its missions in a transparent, independent, and impartial manner. We recognise its past findings, including the most recent report on the Douma incident, and look forward to its continued outstanding work.

We also note with concern that the Technical Secretariat remains unable to resolve identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies in Syria's declaration. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to render the fullest possible cooperation to the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to address all outstanding issues as soon as possible.

Since the establishment of the OPCW in 1997, universal adherence to the Convention has been an utmost priority for the Organisation. Fully convinced that universality of the Convention is critical in ensuring its full implementation, my delegation urges the four remaining States not Party to the Convention to ratify or accede to it as soon as possible without any preconditions. And we look to the Technical Secretariat to continue to strive to achieve our shared goal of universality at the earliest possible time.

My delegation expresses its appreciation to the Technical Secretariat for the continuing efforts to move forward with regard to the ChemTech Centre project even in the midst of these unprecedented times. The project is a crucial undertaking which will enable the OPCW

to better adapt itself to threats which are constantly evolving in nature. It is in recognition of this that the Republic of Korea decided to become the first State Party to make voluntary contributions to the project two years ago. And it continues to do so on an annual basis. My delegation calls on all States Parties to demonstrate their ownership and commitment by pledging financial—and indeed political—commitment to this noble end.

My delegation shares the concerns that new and emerging challenges have the potential to undermine the implementation of the Convention. One key instance is the spectre of the malicious use of central nervous system(CNS)-acting chemicals as chemical weapons. It is indeed time to take action in the policy-making organs to address this pressing matter. In this regard, Korea supports, as a co-sponsor, the draft decision on understanding regarding the aerosolized use of CNS-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes. My delegation asks all delegations to join us in supporting the decision.

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

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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