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FINLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PÄIVI KAUKORANTA
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FINLAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished Delegates,

Finland wishes to thank Ambassador Andrea Perugini for his professionalism and commitment in chairing the Executive Council for the past year. We would also like to welcome Ambassador Agustin Vasquez Gomez as the new Chairperson of the Council. Let me assure you of Finland's full support in achieving a successful outcome of this important meeting.

Finland fully aligns itself with the statement by the European Union. In addition, allow me to highlight a few issues from a national perspective.

This meeting of the Executive Council has a particularly important task. We have before us the first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which convincingly concludes that the chemical weapons attacks that took place in Ltamenah on 24, 25, and 30 March 2017, were carried out by the Syrian Arab Air Force. As States Parties, we are now called upon to formulate an appropriate response to these disturbing findings.

Finland welcomes the report and commends the IIT for its professionalism, technical expertise, and rigorous, impartial analysis. The conclusions of the report are clear and compelling. Together with previously established facts, they confirm that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons on no less than seven occasions since 2014. This puts the Syrian Arab Republic in clear breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In addition, as noted by the IIT, the Syrian Arab Republic has failed to provide a full declaration of its chemical weapons programme and to cooperate fully with the Secretariat and the IIT.

The IIT, with its meticulous work, has provided us with the facts. Now, it is our turn, as States Parties, to act on them. The repeated use of chemical weapons by a State Party is the gravest possible violation of the Convention and the non-use norm it embodies. If we allow it to continue with impunity, we risk endangering not only the credibility of the CWC, but of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture as a whole.



Based on the findings of the IIT report, we now need to jointly agree on a way forward. A clear path must be set for the return of the Syrian Arab Republic to full compliance with the Convention. This is the aim of the proposed draft decision, and that is why we fully support it.

The decision demands that the Syrian Arab Republic cease all use of chemical weapons, provide a full declaration of its chemical weapons programme, and cooperate fully with the Secretariat. What is requested of the Syrian Arab Republic is no more than for it to fulfil its obligations under the CWC—obligations binding on all States Parties—and obligations it has freely undertaken when acceding to the Convention.

The draft decision has been the subject of extensive consultations among States Parties, and we hope for broad support for its adoption.

The use of chemical weapons is a clear violation of international law, and can amount to the most serious international crimes—war crimes and crimes against humanity. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons, in Syria and elsewhere, must be brought to justice. In this effort, all relevant mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court, should be considered.

Finland has supported the establishment of the IIT and OPCW's work in Syria from the start, both politically and financially. We will continue to support the efforts of the IIT on all the remaining investigations. We also welcome the ongoing information sharing between the OPCW and other relevant bodies, such as the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism. Finland is ready to cooperate in the criminal investigation and prosecution of cases of chemical weapons use to the maximum extent possible.

Out of respect for the victims, and to uphold international law, we must send the strongest possible signal that there can be no impunity for these crimes.

I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the external server and the public website.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.