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GUATEMALA

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA TO THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General, Distinguished Permanent Representatives,

I would like to open our statement by congratulating the Chairperson of the Executive Council, H.E. Agustín Vásquez Gómez, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, while also assuring him of the full cooperation of my delegation in achieving the goals of this Ninety-Fourth Session of the Executive Council under his leadership.

Guatemala aligns itself with the efforts carried out by the international community to ensure that together we will continue to combat the challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic; we welcome the work of the Chairperson, the States Parties, and the Technical Secretariat to explore our options and continue working on the issues prescribed by the Chemical Weapons Convention. We urge the Technical Secretariat to ensure that the proceedings established for the conduct of this session will not set a precedent for the Organisation's future work methods.

Guatemala notes and welcomes the reports presented by the Director-General and the Vice-Chairpersons of the Council; it also recognises the work carried out by the facilitators and co-facilitators of the various working groups and their sub-groups, as well as the work of the Technical Secretariat. The commitment shown by all is fundamental for the proper implementation of the provisions set out in the Convention and the responsibilities that lie with this Organisation.

The States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, as stated in its preamble, have determined to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons, especially if we take into account that in this way, we contribute to the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Charter, as doing so maintains international peace and security.

In this regard, Guatemala reiterates its strongest possible condemnation of any use or threat of use of chemical weapons, regardless of who, where, or how it manifests.

Thanks to the regime put in place by the Chemical Weapons Convention and the work of the Technical Secretariat, the international community has achieved, with the support and commitment of the States Parties, the destruction of approximately 97 per cent of the chemical weapons declared by possessor-States. Nevertheless, we call upon the States Parties that are currently in the destruction process to finalise it in order to successfully complete full destruction within the agreed timeframe.



My delegation notes the reports by the Director-General regarding the progress made in eliminating the Syrian chemical weapons programme. Nonetheless, we see with concern that the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic continues to present inconsistencies, in spite of the repeated requests for clarity from the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). We express our appreciation for the valuable work that the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) is carrying out to investigate the various regrettable and unlawful incidents that have taken place in the Syrian Arab Republic involving the use of chemical agents as weapons, and we also value the efforts and the work of the Technical Secretariat in line with the mandates assigned to it in that regard.

Please allow me to call attention to the first report by the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT).

The IIT faithfully fulfilled its mandate, as shown by its first report, dated 8 April 2020. This report sets out the factual results of its investigation into the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Guatemala welcomes and supports the work of the Technical Secretariat, the Organisation, and the IIT.

The IIT's report determined that the tragic incidents that took place on 24, 25, and 30 March 2017 in the city of Ltamenah (Syrian Arab Republic) involved the use of chemical weapons, and that there were multiple reasonable indications to believe that the responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in these incidents lies with the Syrian Air Force. At the same time, we regret that the challenges facing the IIT included the fact that the Team did not have access to the sites of the incidents, in spite of the requests made, which is in violation of what is established in resolution 2118 (2013) of the United Nations Security Council.

The IIT is neither a judicial entity, nor a quasi-judicial entity with the power to prosecute those responsible for the use of chemical weapons. Nevertheless, the use of chemical weapons should not remain forgotten or unpunished. As States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, we cannot fall victim to the petty game of barren politicisation that will essentially render the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention futile, without any constructive or categorical consequences.

As a State Party to the Convention, Guatemala assigns great importance to the universality of the regime under the Convention. It constitutes a priority and instrumental precondition for the achievement of international peace and security, just as what is set out in the preamble of the Convention. It is for this reason that Guatemala continues to be committed to serving as a facilitator to achieve universality.

Finally, Guatemala reiterates its call to all States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction to carry out all of the obligations assumed under the Convention and the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr Chairperson, we request that this statement be considered an official document of the Ninety-Fourth Session of the Council and published on the Organisation's external server and website.