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PORTUGAL

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ROSA BATORÉU PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PORTUGAL TO THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mr Chairperson,

From the outset, I would like to join others in thanking your endeavours as well as those of the members of the Bureau throughout the preparatory work that enabled this session of the Executive Council (“the Council”) to take place.

Ambassador Vásquez Gómez, your competence and diplomatic skills are self-evident, and I firmly believe that under your stewardship the Council will succeed in achieving the important outcomes expected at this session.

Likewise, I wish to emphasise Portugal’s recognition and our gratitude towards the professionalism, the unquestionable independence, and the impartial work of the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) of the OPCW under the able leadership of the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias.

Portugal is cognizant of the extraordinary challenges the pandemic has brought into the planning and performance of core activities of the Organisation. We commend the Director-General, and we are grateful for the solutions that the Secretariat has put forward thus far to minimise negative impacts, and to ensure delivery, engagement with, and assistance to States Parties under these very difficult circumstances.

We encourage the Secretariat to continue assessing and submitting to debate with States Parties further outcome-oriented modalities and options that may contribute to resume operations and activities, taking into account international best practices.

In the same vein, let me also lend a word of sincere appreciation for the efforts pursued by all facilitators in making best use of available means to keep consultations with States Parties effective during the intersessional period.

Portugal associates itself with the statement delivered by Ambassador Gudrun Lingner on behalf of the European Union.

The strict application of international treaties aiming to defend peace and preserve human life requires, today as before, unfaltering perseverance and resolute surveillance. The Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) constitutes, no doubt, a safety buoy for present and future generations and it deserves absolute and unconditional commitment of signatory States Parties, not only displays of sympathy.



Portugal has joined the international community's unequivocal condemnation of the poisoning of Alexei Navalny, and it reiterates the call for the Russian authorities to do their utmost to disclose the circumstances involving this crime.

The convergent conclusions of three independent, specialised, and competent laboratories from Germany, France, and Sweden point to the use in this attack of a "Novichok" agent, a toxic chemical belonging to a group of substances that was recently, and timely, listed as prohibited in the framework of the Convention.

This fact brings to the forefront the urgency of the mission entrusted to the OPCW, in protecting and ensuring implementation of the Convention in order to achieve a world free from chemical weapons. Portugal is thankful for the diligences led by Germany in this regard, and welcomes the technical assistance it has requested from the OPCW Secretariat.

The Portuguese delegation wishes to restate its full support for all activities of the OPCW Secretariat related to Syria, including the work of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), and of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). The work of the Secretariat has resulted in impartial findings and conclusions that were regularly brought to the attention of the States Parties in the most transparent and evidence-based manner.

The first report of the IIT published on 8 April 2020 caused international consternation based on its findings that the Syrian Air Force launched attacks with sarin and chlorine over the town of Ltamenah in March 2017. Acting responsibly, in July 2020, the Council consequently adopted a crucial decision on addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic (EC-94/DEC.2, dated 9 July 2020), as underlined in the European Union's statement.

Portugal condemns to the utmost extent the use of chemical weapons, anywhere, at any time and by any one. Attacks such as the ones that hit Ltamenah are a blatant violation of international law, which under no circumstances can be tolerated. Portugal strongly supports the decision adopted by the Council last July and urges the Syrian Arab Republic to meet its requirements within the given timeframe, with a view to achieving full and unambiguous compliance with the Convention.

The Convention is an essential pillar of the international disarmament and security architecture, and Portugal remains strongly committed to protecting its integrity.

Portugal shares the view that the Director-General's proposed Programme and Budget for 2021 is justified and proportionate. It will allow the OPCW to respond adequately to the challenges this Organisation is facing in these times of uncertainty, while respecting the principle of zero nominal growth in assessed contributions. We call on the Council to enable the submission of the Draft Budget to the Conference of the States Parties without further delay.

Alongside the European Union's funding, and similarly to other States Parties, Portugal has contributed financially to the construction of the new OPCW's Centre for Chemistry and Technology ("ChemTech Centre").

Portugal is certain that the ChemTech Centre will become a leader in research, analysis, training, and capacity building that will reinvigorate the Organisation's capability to adapt to new developments in science and technology, will enhance its verification, detection, and

response activities, and will boost the OPCW's international cooperation efforts. It is an important project that will provide significant collective benefits. We encourage States Parties to join the financial effort to complete the indispensable fundraising for this project until the end of 2020, as called upon by the Secretariat.

I would kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Council and be published on the OPCW website and extranet.

Thank you.

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