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INDIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR VENU RAJAMONY
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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

I take this opportunity to welcome you back as the Chair of the Executive Council. I commend you for your leadership in successfully steering the Ninety-Fourth Session of the Executive Council under challenging circumstances posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and for the active engagement with States Parties on various issues in the intersessional period. The challenges remain, but I am sure under your leadership the session will achieve its objectives. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support. My delegation appreciates the commitment of the Technical Secretariat under the leadership of the Director-General in performing their important tasks during these trying times.

India associates itself with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Fikrat Akhundov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China.

India attaches high importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is a unique, non-discriminatory disarmament instrument and serves as a model for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. We are close to achieving the objective of universal adherence to the Convention. We urge the remaining States that are not Parties to the Convention to consider acceding to the Convention at the earliest.

Destruction of chemical weapons is the most important undertaking made by every State Party to the Convention. All chemical weapons must be destroyed to achieve the objective of full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention. It is important that the process of destruction of the remaining chemical weapons stockpiles is completed before the scheduled timeline.

My delegation has taken note of the alleged poisoning of Mr Alexei Navalny, while underlining that circumstances regarding the incident and subsequent events remain unclear.



Our position on chemical weapons has been clear and consistent. India has been firmly opposed to any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anybody, under any circumstances. With regard to any allegations of use and investigations conducted in this regard, we urge that the provisions and procedures laid down in the Convention be strictly adhered to by the OPCW, and the concerns be addressed on the basis of cooperation among all parties concerned.

We have taken note of the reports of the Director-General on progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. We welcome the continued engagement between Syria and the Technical Secretariat in this regard and look forward to an early resolution of all outstanding issues.

We note that the 2021 OPCW Programme and Budget is presented to be adopted as an omnibus decision. The methodology of an omnibus budget decision, introduced for the first time in 2019, did not enjoy consensus. The decision was finally adopted by vote. Several States Parties had pointed out that such omnibus budget decisions deprive States Parties of the legitimate rights to articulate their views on separate elements of the Programme and Budget. Such concern continues to persist. It is our view that on an important matter like the OPCW Programme and Budget, the Council should make a concerted effort to achieve common ground.

The Council is to consider on the matter of appointment of the External Auditor of the OPCW for the period beginning from the 2021 financial period, and to forward it to the Conference at its Twenty-Fifth Session. We believe that an objective, transparent, and fair process should be conducted for the selection of the External Auditor. Comptroller and Auditor General of India is a candidate for this post, who has strong credentials and valuable experience at the OPCW and other United Nations organisations. India stands ready for further consultations and deliberations on the matter.

We have examined the draft decision on the Understanding Regarding the Aerosolised Use of Central Nervous System(CNS)-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes. It is our view that consultation and further discussion on the issue of aerosolised use of central nervous system(CNS)-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes should continue in the ambit of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We welcome the resumption of the consultations on organisational governance issues under the leadership of Ambassador Mathew Neuhaus of Australia and Ambassador Laura Dupuy of Uruguay. We are confident that under their able leadership the discussions on organisational governance issues would translate into definitive proposals which would enjoy the support of States Parties.

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