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INDIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR VENU RAJAMONY
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished ambassadors and delegates,

At the outset, I congratulate you on your assumption as the Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed several challenges for the smooth conduct of the Conference. I am confident that, under your able leadership, the deliberations of the Conference will be successfully conducted and I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support.

I express my appreciation to H.E. Ambassador Krassimir Kostov, the outgoing Conference Chairperson, for successfully steering the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference, and in smoothly passing the baton to the Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

It has been a tough year for the Technical Secretariat in implementing the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention due to the pandemic. My delegation commends the excellent efforts of the Technical Secretariat, under the leadership of Director-General Ambassador Fernando Arias, in adopting ingenious measures to continue the implementation of the Convention.

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

To achieve the ultimate goal of a world permanently free of chemical weapons, it is imperative that full universality of the Convention is achieved. Universality is also critical to preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons and its access by non-State actors. We call upon remaining States that are not Parties to the Convention to ratify and accede to the Convention without further delay. At the same time, we urge for early destruction of all remaining chemical weapons stockpiles.

We attach importance to the continued cooperation between Syria and the Technical Secretariat in resolving the outstanding issues which are under consideration with the Declaration Assessment Team. We look forward to an early resolution of all outstanding issues.



India's position on chemical weapons has been unequivocal and consistent. Any use of chemical weapons is in complete disregard of humanity, reprehensible, and contrary to the provisions of the Convention, as well as acceptable international legal norms. India has been firmly opposed to any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anybody, and under any circumstances. Any allegations of use of chemical weapons must be dealt with strictly as per the provisions and procedures laid down in the Convention, and concerns must be addressed through consultation and cooperation among all parties concerned.

I reiterate India's principled opposition to the Investigation and Identification Team, in light of India's concerns on the substance as well as the process of its establishment. In this regard, we took note of the report of the Investigation and Identification Team on incidents in Ltamenah, and had urged for engagement and dialogue with the State Party to resolve the issues. We have noted the report of the Director-General on the implementation of the decision of the Executive Council on Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the response of the Syrian Arab Republic on the matter. We believe that dialogue and engagement with the State Party would be a fair and reasonable way forward towards resolving these issues.

We commend the efforts of vice-chairpersons, coordinators and facilitators for various clusters of issues for their efforts in revitalising the existing facilitations. We have noted the non-paper on the OPCW tenure policy by the co-facilitators on organisational governance issues, H.E. Ambassador Matthew Neuhaus of Australia and H.E. Ambassador Laura Dupuy of Uruguay. My delegation stands ready to continue the deliberations and consultations on all issues with the objective of advancing the full and effective implementation of the Convention.

India attaches great importance to the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI, as well as the promotion of international cooperation for the peaceful applications of chemistry. We note the ongoing efforts of the Secretariat in enhancing international cooperation and capacity-building activities under Article XI. We urge the Technical Secretariat to address bottlenecks in the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI, and urge States Parties to continue supporting the Technical Secretariat in its efforts to augment its activities in the implementation of Article XI.

The OPCW needs to select a new External Auditor for the period commencing in 2021. The Comptroller and Auditor General of India is one of the candidates, and has strong credentials. India's Comptroller and Auditor General possesses a cumulative international audit experience of 88 years, including serving as the External Auditor of the OPCW from 1997 to 1999, and from 2000 to 2002. He has offered to provide high-quality professional auditor services in a most cost-effective manner. We call upon the Conference to decide on the matter objectively and fairly, with due consideration to the technical merit of the candidates.

India remains ready to engage constructively with all States Parties for the success of this Conference, and to find ways and means to strengthen the Convention and its effective implementation, within the framework of the Convention.

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

I thank you.