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JAMAICA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SHEILA SEALY MONTEITH
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF JAMAICA TO THE OPCW AT THE
TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Excellencies and other distinguished delegates,

Let me first extend congratulations to you, Excellency, Mr José Antonio Zabalgaitia Trejo, on behalf of the Government of Jamaica, on your appointment as Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. You may rest assured of Jamaica's support for your stewardship of the Conference over the next year. Jamaica also expresses great appreciation to H.E. Mr Krassimir Kostov of Bulgaria, Chairperson of the Twenty-Fourth Conference of the States Parties, for his admirable leadership in the face of the unique challenges occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I also salute the Director-General and his team from the Technical Secretariat, who have worked tirelessly during this challenging year to ensure the continuation of the important work of the Organisation, the fulfilment of mandates of the States Parties, and the pursuit of the objectives of the Convention.

Jamaica remains unwavering in its commitment to the principles and objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which envisions a world free of chemical weapons and one in which chemistry is used for peaceful purposes, in support of the economic and technological advancement of States Parties. In this regard, we continue to support the work of the Organisation towards full national implementation of the Convention. At the same time, Jamaica calls on all States Parties to respect the principles to which we have committed, and on States not Party to ratify the Convention as soon as possible.

Tomorrow, we observe the Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare. This is not just another commemorative activity. It is, instead, an opportunity to reflect on the lives destroyed and disrupted by the use of chemical weapons. Images of death and suffering of victims of chemical warfare should not become mundane. Rather, they should spur us to continue the work of ensuring non-proliferation and complete disarmament. We have made great strides under the Convention, but we cannot now rest on our laurels, as much remains to be done.

Jamaica expresses deep concern about the continued use of chemical weapons. We take note of the first report of the Identification and Investigation Team (IIT), published in April 2020, and its attribution of responsibility for incidents in Ltamenah, Syria, in March 2017. We take



this opportunity to reaffirm our support for the IIT, whose work will serve to enhance the accountability of States Parties in respect of chemical weapons use.

Mr Chairperson,

Over the years, Jamaica has benefitted tremendously from the capacity-building and technical assistance programmes offered by the Organisation, including the Associate Programme, Internship Programme, various training sessions, and other support to the National Authority. This year, in particular, we laud the Secretariat's migration to virtual training sessions, in which we have been able to participate. Jamaica recognises the importance of continuing these efforts at international cooperation, as well as in building on the achievements of the Organisation in the elimination of chemical weapons stockpiles and its verification, fact-finding, and attribution activities. It is in this context that Jamaica supports the Draft OPCW Programme and Budget for 2021, which will ensure that the Organisation has the necessary resources to carry on its vital work. Jamaica hopes that a consensus can be achieved on the relevant draft decision.

Jamaica further welcomes the progress on the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology, which will facilitate the technical work of the Organisation, as well as enhance capacity building. We look forward to the beginning of construction in the upcoming year.

Speaking of capacity building, as we move forward, we encourage greater support for States Parties in strengthening customs controls and transfers of chemical substances, and look forward to benefiting from the exchange of experts and the training of first responders in the case of chemical emergencies.

Mr Chairperson,

All States Parties have a moral obligation to support the full and effective implementation of the Convention. There is still much work to do in addressing new threats, such as chemical terrorism, as well as the periodic chemical weapons attacks that we have witnessed over the last few years. In order to move forward, we must ensure that the Organisation is fit for purpose and nimble. We must, therefore, redouble our efforts at cooperation and consensus, which have been threatened by the increasing politicisation of our work and polarisation within the Organisation. The current COVID-19 pandemic has also made it clear that the OPCW must be prepared to secure business continuity in situations of crisis. Jamaica, therefore, looks forward to the deliberations on organising the work of the policy-making organs in emergency situations.

The full and effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention demands the commitment of all Member States. It is a collective effort. Failure to compromise and genuinely seek consensus militates against this objective, and by extension, undermines the very tenets of multilateralism of which the OPCW is a pre-eminent example. Most importantly, our failure will undoubtedly result in further loss of lives and livelihoods. It is within our power to prevent this.

I thank you.