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SWEDEN

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ANNIKA MARKOVIC
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF SWEDEN TO THE
OPCW AT THE NINETY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

I would like to begin by welcoming the new Chairperson of the Executive Council, H.E. Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki of Morocco. Mr Chairperson, let me assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Swedish delegation.

Allow me to extend Sweden's warm thanks to Director-General Fernando Arias and the Technical Secretariat for their fortitude in ensuring the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter "the Convention"). Their efforts are much appreciated, not least under the prevailing exceptional circumstances.

Sweden stands firmly behind the statement of the European Union. I would like to add a few remarks in our national capacity.

The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic continues to be at the centre of our attention. It is extremely worrying that Syria continues its stance of inadequate cooperation with the OPCW. We believe that the decision of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to suspend the voting rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic due to its failure to comply with the Convention was an appropriate response to the continued violation of the Convention. The decision is a signal by the international community that impunity for the use of chemical weapons will not be tolerated.

We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to reveal the full extent of its chemical weapons programme and to fully comply with the Convention.

We must never forget that the use of chemical weapons by anyone—be it a State or a non-State actor—anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances is a violation of international law and may amount to the most serious crimes of international concern - war crimes and crimes against humanity. It is the responsibility of all States to uphold the global norm on the non-use of chemical weapons.

Allow me once again to reiterate Sweden's full support for the work of the OPCW in the Syrian Arab Republic. We condemn in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian armed forces, as concluded by the two reports of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), the latest one published in April. The comprehensive follow-up of its findings must be ensured.



Sweden has contributed to the OPCW trust fund for Syria missions since its establishment. We encourage other States Parties to also support the fund.

The European Union has consistently condemned the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny who was poisoned with a military chemical nerve agent of the novichok group, as confirmed by three OPCW designated laboratories, among them the laboratory of the Swedish Defence Research Agency, as well as by two OPCW designated laboratories and the OPCW itself.

We call once again on the government of the Russian Federation to do its utmost to disclose the circumstances of this crime in full transparency and bring those responsible to justice and to fully cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation. Accountability for the use of chemical weapons must be established and upheld. Impunity for these crimes must never be accepted.

Sweden is, along with the vast majority of States Parties to the Convention, a determined supporter of the integrity and impartiality of the OPCW. We reject, as we have done on numerous occasions in the past few years, all groundless accusations directed towards the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat.

Chairperson, Sweden is fully committed to assist the OPCW in achieving its goals of gender mainstreaming and balanced gender representation in the near future. We commend the Director-General for his efforts to that end. There has been a lot of progress, but even more can be done to overcome the remaining challenges and seize the opportunities for more equal representation. We welcome the inclusion of equality in OPCW's courses and programmes on safety and security. The gender audit is also a positive step. We look forward to its implementation plan and the allocation of adequate resources.

Lastly, Sweden, as one of the co-sponsors of the draft decision on the "Understanding Regarding the Aerosolized Use of Central Nervous System (CNS)-acting chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes" looks forward to its adoption at the next Conference of States Parties and urges all states to support it.

Thank you.