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POLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MARCIN CZEPELAK
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND TO THE
OPCW AT THE NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

Upon consultation with the facilitator of the Industry Cluster, Mrs Bianca Müller, Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the OPCW, I would like to briefly present to the Council today the summary activities within the Industry Cluster in the intersessional period.

Due to restrictions related to COVID-19 one meeting of the Industry Cluster was held online in advance of the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council on 25 February 2021. In such a manner we were able to discuss thoroughly an issue of utmost importance urgently requiring the States Parties' understanding.

The presentation delivered by the Technical Secretariat ("the Secretariat") provided details of its plan for carrying out the Article VI inspections mandated in the 2021 programme and budget in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Secretariat committed to provide regular updates to the States Parties through the Executive Council, the Industry Cluster, and routine Notes by the Secretariat on its further works in this regard.

I would like to draw your attention to the following points stemming from the discussion.

First, the Secretariat took the views of delegations on presented plans and answered questions raised by States Parties regarding various issues covered by the discussion. Many delegations supported the idea of giving particular priority to inspections of Schedule 1 facilities, as well as initial inspections of Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 plant sites during 2021. They recognised the Secretariat's efforts to resume the Article VI inspections once travel restrictions will be lifted, while at the same time taking measures to ensure that the health and safety of all personnel involved are considered.

Second, several Delegations stressed the necessity of bilateral discussions between National Authorities and the Secretariat prior to carrying out any Article VI inspections. Such consultations will identify appropriate solutions that would allow Article VI inspections to be carried out, as the situation in each country can differ. Delegations also mentioned the need for timely updates regarding the planned resumption of Article VI inspections.



Third, the Secretariat underlined the need for creative solutions in order to carry out Article VI inspections under the current COVID-19 circumstances. It may be appropriate for inspection teams, for example, in a situation when a quarantine is required upon arrival in a given State Party, to carry out several inspections after they entered the territory of such a given State Party. Some States Parties raised their concern that such an idea might not be feasible at this time, which was duly noted. Many agreed that this and other such solutions may warrant some further consideration and discussion later this year.

Last but not least, the consultations made it obvious that due to the COVID-19 restrictions in every State Party, also this year, similarly to 2020, it seems to be very unlikely that all the planned and budgeted 241 Article VI inspections can be implemented. In practical terms this will mean two years in a row with considerably less Article VI inspections than planned. Accordingly, such a situation would probably have an impact on the conduct of inspections in 2022. From my perspective, these issues require to be further discussed and addressed under the Industry Cluster framework and, as appropriate, at political level.

Concluding, and having also in mind that it is most probably my last meeting as the Vice-Chairperson of the Executive Council being responsible for the Industry Cluster, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for Mrs Müller, and the Secretariat, for their joint and persistent efforts in recent months aimed at promoting the goals of the Industry Cluster, in a very difficult environment. I would like also to thank all States Parties for their engagement and support over the last year. I wish you all the best in the forthcoming months, with a strong hope that we will be able to function very soon again in traditional circumstances.

Thank you.

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