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STATE OF PALESTINE

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR RAWAN SULAIMAN
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TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Excellencies, Heads of delegation,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway on his election as Chairperson of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference. We are fully confident that, with his wise leadership and his diplomatic abilities and experience, he will steer this important Conference towards success and the achievement of its desired objectives. We affirm our continuous support for his efforts in this regard.

We take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks to the Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference, H.E. Ambassador José Antonio Zabalgoitia Trejo of Mexico for steering the Conference with professionalism and competence.

I also wish to extend my greetings and appreciation to the Director-General of the OPCW, H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his informative and comprehensive report to this session and for the continuous efforts that he and his team in the Technical Secretariat are making to promote and energise the role of the OPCW in eliminating weapons of mass destruction and implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention.

My country's delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Fikrat Akhundov, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the OPCW, on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Convention and China.

Universality is a key aspect of the Convention. The achievements made in the universality of the Convention are evidence of its international standing and the large support for its lofty objectives, with the number of States Parties now totalling 193 States, representing 98% of the world population. However, universality will remain incomplete as long as even a single State remains outside the scope of the Convention. Therefore, my country's delegation calls upon the States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention without delay, thereby contributing to the promotion of international peace and security. It is our duty to keep universality at the top of our agenda. This was emphasised by the successive sessions of the



Conference, including the Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which reviewed the action plan regarding universality, reaffirmed its terms of reference, and urged the remaining States not Party to the Convention to join it. In particular, they stressed that the universality of the Convention is necessary to achieve its objectives, including enhancing the security of the States Parties, as well as international peace and security. Thus, the effectiveness of the Convention rests upon the absolute universality of its implementation.

The State of Palestine firmly believes that achieving true peace in the Middle East begins with making the region free of all weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons. Israel is the only State that possesses an enormous stockpile of these deadly weapons and continues to use weapons against unarmed Palestinian civilians. Therefore, the immunity granted to Israel, the illegal occupying power, must stop. Israel must be demanded to accede promptly to the Convention and to comply fully with all its provisions, rather than just sign it without acceding to it, as this is granting Israel some rights without any obligations, while keeping it immune and protected from all forms of accountability.

The OPCW's efforts to achieve significant progress in all aspects of international cooperation are in need of continuous support from all Parties. In addition to capacity-building activities for the implementation of Articles VII and X of the Convention, continuous support is needed for measures relating to international cooperation. These measures are required in the area of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under the Convention, in order to advance the technological development of all States Parties. In this regard, there is an urgent need for a discussion within the OPCW policy-making organs on the implementation of Article XI of the Convention to ensure that a strategy is developed which would include an action plan for implementing Article XI of the Convention and allow for conducting systematic needs assessments in that area and periodic evaluations of these programmes, in order to improve their effectiveness and sustainable impact, while taking into consideration on the whole all activities undertaken by the Organisation in the area of international cooperation to implement the Convention. This would also allow for the full application of the components of the agreed framework for the full implementation of Article XI of the Convention, including national capacity building in the safe use of chemicals for purposes not prohibited thereunder; promoting cooperation and experience sharing among scientific communities, academic institutions, the chemical industry, non-governmental organisations, and regional and international institutions; enhancing the effectiveness of the ongoing international cooperation programmes of the OPCW, as well as the measures taken by States Parties and the OPCW to facilitate the peaceful exchange of chemicals, equipment, and scientific and technical information relating to the development and application of chemistry, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. The transfer of substantial funds in excess of EUR 2 million from the International Cooperation and Assistance Programme since 2015 is a cause for concern. This Programme is important for developing Member States of the OPCW. Unfortunately, this policy of reducing the budget allocations for the Programme started seven years ago. The reduction needs to be compensated and redressed by looking into the practical options available, including keeping unused funds from the International Cooperation and Assistance Programme in the special fund. In this regard, the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI of the Convention is paramount.

Furthermore, the State of Palestine stresses the importance of training courses and awareness programmes in attaining the objectives of the Convention which lays emphasis on economic and technological development and international cooperation in the field of chemical activities

for purposes not prohibited thereunder. In this context, my country's delegation underscores the need for greater efforts with respect to the transfer to developing States of technology, equipment, and expertise in chemical industries not prohibited under the Convention.

The State of Palestine highly appreciates the technical nature of the OPCW's work. Therefore, we call upon all international parties to work closely together in order to preserve the nature of the OPCW's work, by maintaining the customary practice of consensus in decision making to avoid politicisation and polarisation which could undermine the integrity of the Convention and the unity of our Organisation. We also believe that dialogue and cooperation between all States Parties are the best way to achieve the aspirations of this Organisation and its Convention.

The OPCW has achieved tremendous success thanks to the continuous support of States Parties. In this respect, the State of Palestine underscores the importance of the future priorities of the OPCW and commends the work accomplished thus far by the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW.

Since its accession to the Convention, the State of Palestine has been implementing its obligations under the Convention and developing a series of national implementation measures, practices, and legislations. We highly appreciate the encouragement and support provided to us by the Technical Secretariat to this end. We are confident that the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW will undertake its role in helping the States Parties that lack adequate resources obtain appropriate technical assistance and support so that they may implement the Convention fully.

The participation of the State of Palestine in this and other conferences aiming at disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is an expression of the political will to achieve the objectives of mankind as a whole and to accede to all disarmament instruments and conventions, including the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is also an expression of Palestine's principled positions on countering the proliferation of these weapons in order to achieve international security on a fair and equitable basis, as well as regional security, in order to make the Middle East region free of all these weapons. My country has incessantly called upon the international community to provide the necessary support for this objective, which constitutes a legitimate right of the people of the region and a fundamental pillar for enhancing regional and international security and peace.

The State of Palestine takes pride in its accession to the other weapons of mass destruction-related instruments. There is a moral and legal obligation to ensure the complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and protect humanity from the existential threat and catastrophic humanitarian consequences of these weapons.

In conclusion, we would like to underscore the full commitment of the State of Palestine and its cooperation with all other States Parties for the success of this Conference in order to build an organisation that is capable of truly freeing the world of all chemical weapons.

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the OPCW public website and Catalyst platform.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.