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CZECH REPUBLIC

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR KATEŘINA SEQUENSOVÁ
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and would like to use this opportunity to underline a few points in its national capacity.

We would like to thank you, Mr Chairperson, for all the preparatory efforts that allow us to conduct this meeting. Let me also express our sincere appreciation for all the hard work of the Director-General, Fernando Arias, and the Technical Secretariat under ongoing challenging circumstances posed by COVID-19. We have full confidence in you, Mr Director-General, and in your staff and we very much value your professionalism and independence. Your able leadership and managerial skills have demonstrated in the last years that you are the most suitable person for this position and we support your re-election.

Continued violations of the key principles of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) by the Syrian Arab Republic led us this April to the adoption of the decision by the Conference of the States Parties and the suspension of certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic. States Parties showed goodwill towards Syria and gave it many opportunities to comply with its obligations stemming from the Convention, including the submission of a full declaration and complete destruction of its chemical weapons. Yet Syria did not respond to those calls. In addition to these violations of the Convention, Syria repeatedly used chemical weapons as was confirmed by the independent investigation carried out by, among others, the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism and the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team. Such a clear violation of international law and, in particular international humanitarian law, prompted firm and decisive action by the international community with a view to upholding the Convention and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

We are concerned with the latest developments in the Syrian dossier presented by the Technical Secretariat on 30 September that have a negative impact on its work. We deplore the fact that this dossier could not be closed due to the lack of cooperation by the Syrian Arab Republic. Cooperation is one of the cornerstones of the Convention and therefore we reiterate our call on the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat, including with the issuance of visas to all OPCW staff on time. We note that Syria has engaged with the OPCW



personnel on preparations for the high-level visit, and we encourage Syria to continue with these efforts.

The Czech Republic would like to express its deep concern with the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny, who was poisoned on the territory of the Russian Federation by a chemical nerve agent of the novichok group. The attack requires the full attention of this Council. The circumstances of the attack must be credibly disclosed, and it is the responsibility of the Russian Federation to do so, as it took place on its territory.

The Czech Republic supports the biennial Draft Programme and Budget for 2022 and 2023. We consider the proposal justified. We, States Parties, have entrusted the OPCW with an important task for the international community as a whole which the Technical Secretariat has been carrying out, notwithstanding many challenges. It is thus necessary that the continuation of the work of the OPCW is ensured. Now it is our turn that the OPCW can fulfill its mandate by providing it with necessary funding. Therefore, we encourage States Parties at this Council to recommend this draft budget for approval to the Conference of the States Parties.

The Czech Republic underlines the key role that the Center for Chemistry and Technology will play in strengthening the OPCW's capabilities to address new and emerging chemical weapons threats, enhance investigative capabilities, and support capacity building for OPCW Member States. We express our gratitude to the Technical Secretariat for its efforts to keep the project on track, which was demonstrated two weeks ago by the first pillar ceremony.

We recognise that COVID-19 has changed our lives and our working environment too. Moving to an online world was the only viable alternative to get the work done. We therefore support the German initiative on Executive Council business continuity as it enables the OPCW to adapt to new situations in order to fulfill its tasks.

We would like to ask that this statement be considered an official document of this Council session and posted on both the external server and the public website.

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