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OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AT ITS 100TH SESSION

1. I warmly welcome all delegations to this historic 100th Session of the Executive Council, marking 25 years of common work for the benefit of the international community. Common work, collective effort, and a significant amount of public money invested. My tribute goes out to all of those who worked here before us, because thanks to their legacy we are endowed with an important instrument to continue working together for global peace and security.
2. I welcome in particular the new Chairperson of the Council, Ambassador Ziad Al Atiyah, the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the OPCW. Ambassador, your rich experience in diplomacy will greatly benefit the work of the Council. I have no doubt of your success as the new Chairperson.
3. I extend my appreciation to the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Dr Eniola Olaitan Ajayi, the Permanent Representative of Nigeria, for her skilful leadership of the Council at a critical time of transition.
4. I convey my gratitude to all of the outgoing Members of the Council and welcome all the new ones joining us today. I also seize this opportunity to bid farewell to the Ambassadors who have left the Organisation since the last Executive Council session, and to those who will be leaving in the summer. I warmly welcome the Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives who have just arrived.
5. The lifting of COVID-19 restrictions by the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has allowed us to hold this session with less stringent measures. Nonetheless, we must remain careful and respect the guidelines approved by the Council to limit the spread of the virus. Official figures related to the increase in the number of infections, including in the Netherlands, are worrisome as they show that the virus is still prevalent. An important consideration for this Council is to reduce, to the extent possible, the duration of the session for our collective health and security.
6. I wish to begin by highlighting some key developments in the intersessional period.
7. On 20 May, we commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention and the establishment of the OPCW, with a seminar that took place in this room. I wish to convey my appreciation to all Members of the Council for your attendance and active participation in that event. A recurring theme from the seminar was that the taboo against the use, or threat of use, of chemical weapons remains strong. Yet, there is no room for complacency, especially as we approach the end of the destruction phase.



8. As at 30 June 2022, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by possessor States Parties of 99.29% of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles, or 71,789 metric tonnes. The destruction of the remaining stockpiles is on course to be completed in 2023. During my bilateral visit to the United States of America last month, I discussed the matter with senior government officials, and the destruction is progressing well.
9. The upcoming end of the destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles is only the culmination of an important period, but not the conclusion of our common task.
10. Preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons and their use is an enduring endeavour. As demonstrated by communications from the Russian Federation and Ukraine, shared with all States Parties, the threat of use of chemical weapons in Ukraine is a serious concern. For this reason, the Secretariat has been closely monitoring the situation since the end of February. It has done so both from a security perspective and to assess the impact of the conflict on the possible chemical industry inspections in the country. It has also remained in contact with both the Russian Federation and Ukraine on matters related to the implementation of the Convention in Ukraine. The Secretariat has also provided advice to the United Nations Designated Security Official and the United Nations Security Management Team in Ukraine on planning and preparing in case of an incident involving chemical warfare agents or toxic industrial chemicals.
11. I note that support has been provided to Ukraine, upon its request, and in line with the Convention, through contributions and pledges to the trust fund for assistance and protection against chemical weapons. To date, three States Parties have contributed EUR 744,000 to the trust fund, while three others have made pledges totalling about EUR 400,000. Over the years, the Secretariat has developed assistance and protection programmes and activities for all States Parties. Needless to say, the overall security situation in Ukraine continues to affect the ability of the Secretariat to conduct in-person activities for Ukrainian participants and to deploy for inspections of Ukrainian chemical industry facilities. The Secretariat will continue monitoring the situation and providing additional assistance.
12. I will now turn to the physical security of the Headquarters. During the Council's last session, I informed you that a full internal security risk assessment by our security team had been carried out. I also briefed you on the measures that we are adopting to reinforce the security of the OPCW building and its perimeter.
13. As you were informed at the March session of the Council, the implementation of these measures will require additional funding. The total required funding for the security upgrades is estimated at EUR 6.5 million. The Secretariat has reprioritised and reallocated existing funds in the amount of EUR 810,000 from the Special Fund for Cybersecurity, Business Continuity and Physical Infrastructure Security, to begin work on the highest priority upgrades for the reception area. Nevertheless, EUR 5.7 million is still required. The Secretariat's security team has been consulting with interested States Parties on the outstanding funds, and I am encouraged by the response so far.
14. I am pleased to inform you that the Secretariat has already undertaken some initial work. An upgrade of the physical security systems has been completed. It encompasses the installation of a new access control system, intercoms, closed-circuit television, and the issuance of new access badges. Procurement processes have begun to establish

a secure compartment in the reception area, as well as to upgrade the security critical areas from the fifth to the seventh floors. Additionally, new garage gates at the Headquarters are scheduled to be installed this summer.

15. This work is essential to ensuring the present and future security of the OPCW Headquarters building and its perimeter.
16. This year alone, over 20 demonstrations have taken place outside the building, with a peak of two demonstrations per week since early May.
17. The Secretariat is in permanent contact with the relevant Dutch authorities and continues to request adequate security support. This includes the provision of police protection on the boundaries and in the vicinity of the Headquarters, in line with the authorities' responsibilities under the Host Country's international legal framework. The Host Country has been repeatedly informed that the high number of demonstrations has stretched the Secretariat's resources for safeguarding the control and authority of the OPCW Headquarters. This has resulted in additional costs in overtime for security staff, thus far estimated at EUR 15,000 at the end of June 2022.
18. The project for the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) has recorded a steady progress. This demonstrates that the Secretariat continues to deliver. Construction has been kept on schedule and respecting budget. Completion of the Centre is expected by the end of this year, despite the continuing impacts of the pandemic, current global inflation, and supply chain challenges. We plan to begin activities at the Centre in spring 2023 after an inauguration ceremony. All 193 OPCW Member States will be invited. As usual for such important events, States Parties are invited to consider the most appropriate level of participation of representatives, be it at the level of ambassador, minister, or higher.
19. A Note providing an update on the progress of the ChemTech Centre was shared with all States Parties last month (S/2072/2022, dated 24 June 2022), and a briefing on its status will take place tomorrow. Another Note on future projects at the ChemTech Centre was shared with the States Parties in March (S/2034/2022, dated 1 March 2022). I thank the States Parties that have already provided written feedback in respect of this Note, which will be reflected in the next version of the Secretariat's proposal. Receiving written comments from States Parties is essential for the Secretariat. I invite delegations to continue sharing their views on the proposals put forward so far. In line with the Secretariat's timely and sequenced approach to the preparation of these projects, a further and more detailed Note on anticipated programmes and activities at the Centre will be issued to States Parties after the summer.
20. I reiterate my sincere appreciation to all contributors for their financial support. Thanks to them, the international community will have an essential tool that will benefit peace and security. To date, financial contributions and pledges totalling EUR 33.9 million have been received from 53 countries, the European Union, and other donors. The trust fund for the Centre remains open for further contributions. Additional donations will provide extra assurances for the successful completion of the Centre, and for projects to be carried out there as soon as it becomes operational in 2023.

21. As we look to the future, the Fifth Review Conference is the moment to assess the implementation of the Convention over the past few years, and to set the strategic direction of the Organisation for the next five years and beyond. I am pleased to note that the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference has begun its important work. The Group held two meetings in June, under the able stewardship of Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia. The Secretariat will continue to support this process by providing presentations, and by issuing the comprehensive Note on the implementation of the Convention since the last Review Conference in 2018.
22. On 30 June, an informal briefing was provided to States Parties related to the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons dossier.
23. The Secretariat, through the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), has continued its efforts to clarify the shortcomings noted in the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration.
24. As I informed the Council previously, since April 2021, over a year ago, the Secretariat has not been able to deploy the DAT to carry out the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority. The Syrian Arab Republic has repeatedly refused to issue an entry visa to the lead technical expert from the DAT, a top expert who has deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic more than 20 times. Seeking to make progress in the work of the DAT, the Secretariat alternatively proposed a meeting between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority in Beirut, Lebanon. Yet, the Syrian Arab Republic conditioned its participation in this limited round of consultations in Beirut on the exclusion from this meeting of the same DAT expert.
25. A similar situation of paralysis already occurred between June 2016 and April 2019. I quote what my predecessor reported to the Council in July 2016: "A continuation of this effort without a change in approach by the Syrian Arab Republic to resolve all outstanding issues related to its declaration is unlikely to yield concrete results". Aware of this precedent, the Secretariat has proposed, pending a change of attitude from the Syrian Arab Republic, that shortcomings in its initial declaration be addressed through the exchange of correspondence. I wish to highlight that such an exchange generates fewer outcomes when compared to deployments by the DAT. I restate that the Syrian Arab Republic has an obligation to allow full and unfettered access to personnel designated by the OPCW under the Convention, United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), and the corresponding decisions of the OPCW policy-making organs.
26. Pursuant to paragraph 11 of the Council decision adopted in November 2016, the Secretariat plans to conduct two rounds of inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) this year.
27. Regarding the Schedule 2.B.04 chemical detected during the third round of inspections in November 2018 at the Barzah facility of the SSRC, the Secretariat has engaged with the Syrian Arab Republic on this matter mostly through the exchange of letters. As previously reported, the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information that would enable the Secretariat to close this issue.
28. The OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) is currently working on allegations that have been assessed as credible. The FFM is continuing to analyse information collected from deployments conducted by its team and is preparing for upcoming deployments. It will report on the allegations under investigation in due course.

29. The Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) has looked into the two reports by the FFM, issued by the Secretariat on 24 and 31 January 2022, regarding two incidents—one in Marea in September 2015 and the other in Kafr Zeita in October 2016. It did so to determine whether those reports provide sufficient material to launch investigations into identifying the perpetrators involved in these incidents. The Syrian Arab Republic continues to refuse to engage with the IIT in any way. At the same time, the IIT continues to make progress on its current investigations, and its next report will be issued in due course.
30. I again recall the decision adopted by the Conference of the States Parties at its April 2021 session entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (C-25/DEC.9, dated 21 April 2021), which suspended certain rights and privileges of that State Party. The Conference decided that these rights will be reinstated once I have reported that the Syrian Arab Republic has completed the requested measures adopted in the July 2020 Executive Council decision. To date, the Syrian Arab Republic has not completed any of these measures.
31. As I have repeatedly stated while briefing the Council, over a year ago I invited the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic to an in-person meeting in The Hague or any other mutually agreed place, such as Geneva. The goal of such a meeting is to ensure that the Syrian Arab Republic complies with all its obligations under the Convention, the relevant decisions of the OPCW policy-making organs, and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) in the shortest possible time. No communication regarding my last message on this matter (dated 20 December 2021) has been received from the Syrian side. When the Syrian Arab Republic is ready to back its declarations of commitment with actions, including by engaging constructively on the venue and agenda, the Secretariat will be ready to engage accordingly. In any event, as Director-General, I cannot justify travelling to a State Party that has been deprived of certain rights by the Conference of the States Parties.
32. For its part, the Secretariat continues to implement its mandates under the Convention, the decisions of the policy-making organs, and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.
33. I now turn to updates on the Secretariat’s other activities.
34. With the lifting of COVID-19 measures and the subsequent relaxation of travel restrictions, the International Cooperation and Assistance Division has resumed in-person capacity-building activities, in tandem with the delivery of online capacity-building support. Since the last session of the Council, 38 capacity-building events, including 20 online and 18 in-person, have been conducted, benefitting 1,176 participants from all geographical regions.
35. On destruction-related activities, the Secretariat has maintained its verification activities at chemical weapons destruction facilities in the United States of America. As at 30 June 2022, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by the United States of 27,255 MT, or 98.14%, of its Category 1 chemical weapons stockpile. The United States plans to complete the destruction of the remaining 1.86% of its stockpile by the agreed deadline of 2023.

36. As was decided by the Conference last year, 180 chemical industry inspections are planned for 2022. Since the March session of the Council, the Secretariat has conducted 62 inspections. Yet, considering among other things the ongoing impact of COVID-19-related measures that China has had to adopt responsibly to further limit the spread of the virus, which we all fully understand, it is now obvious that the Secretariat will not be able to conduct all 180 planned inspections. The Secretariat will continue to monitor the situation, to adapt its planned activities, and to report to the Council accordingly.
37. China and Japan have continued bilateral consultations on the excavation, recovery, and destruction of abandoned chemical weapons (ACW) at various sites in China. As at 31 May 2022, a total of 60,033 of the 89,836 declared items of ACW on the territory of China have been reported by Japan as destroyed. Because of the current situation regarding COVID-19, no ACW inspections have been carried out in China since the last session of the Council. The Secretariat, China, and Japan are in the process of scheduling the next virtual trilateral meeting. The focus of this meeting will include the possibility of conducting verification activities, despite the COVID-19 situation.
38. Regarding old chemical weapons (OCW), since the last session of the Council the Secretariat has conducted two OCW inspections, in the Netherlands and in Estonia. The Netherlands informed the Secretariat of its intention to transfer two items of OCW to Belgium for disposal at a dedicated destruction facility. These items were manufactured prior to 1925. A national paper on this matter has been circulated to the Council (EC-100/NAT.1, dated 10 June 2022). The Secretariat conducted a technical assistance visit to Estonia from 13 to 16 June to assist with the assessment of a suspected OCW item.
39. As was repeatedly highlighted during the twenty-fifth anniversary seminar, the end of the destruction phase requires the Organisation to strengthen its focus on preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons, including countering chemical terrorism.
40. The Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, chaired by Ambassador Madonsela of South Africa, leads this crucial work and met on 27 June. A representative of the office of the European Union Counter-Terrorism Coordinator and the Head of the Secretariat of the Network of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Chemical, Biological, and Radiological Defence Experts gave presentations on regional coordination in countering chemical terrorism. In addition, the Group discussed issues that may be useful to the preparatory process for the Fifth Review Conference. I thank the Chairperson for facilitating this discussion, which is helpful for the Review Conference preparations, but also provides useful inputs to the work of the Secretariat.
41. I am pleased to note the resumption of in-person meetings of the OPCW's subsidiary and other bodies following the new measures. Their work is vital to strengthening Convention implementation.
42. The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and the Advisory Body on Administrative and Financial Matters (ABAF) met last month. The Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO) will meet this month, as will the ABAF again.
43. I was informed that at the last meeting of the facilitation on internal governance issues, it was suggested that a number of topics, including the tenure policy and other governance-related matters, be discussed as part of the preparatory process for the Fifth

Review Conference. I consider this to be the most efficient way forward, as it avoids duplication of efforts and still allows States Parties to continue to work on those matters. I wish to sincerely thank the two co-facilitators, Ambassador Matthew Neuhaus of Australia and Ambassador Elisabeth Ward of Panama. Thanks to their efforts, the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference has a good basis on which to work.

44. With respect to geographical diversity within the Secretariat, we continue to utilise additional opportunities to present the OPCW as an attractive employer. We have done so in particular in regions from which the number of qualified applicants for vacancies remains comparatively low. Additional measures that we have adopted include involving the ABEO, highlighting this issue in the OPCW Associate Programme, and raising awareness in our presentations to the regional meetings of National Authorities and at other events. I strongly encourage States Parties to embark upon similar efforts and to raise the profile of the OPCW as a unique career opportunity.
45. All of the activities I have mentioned require the support of a robust OPCW administration. As States Parties wish the Secretariat to continue its efforts on these important matters, I invite them to consider ways to strengthen the Administration Division to continue to deliver as requested.
46. Like with other institutions, the OPCW's operations have been affected by global inflationary pressures, including sharp increases in utility and travel costs.
47. The Secretariat is managing the cost pressures of this dynamic year, largely through expected savings imposed by COVID-19 travel restrictions earlier this year, as well as through the use of extrabudgetary resources.
48. The prospect of continuing, and historically significant, inflationary pressure is also being taken into consideration as the Secretariat prepares the draft budget update for the mid-biennium 2023.
49. The proposal for this update will be circulated soon after the current session of the Council. It will incorporate only limited essential changes to the 2023 budget, based on unpredictable developments when the biennium budget was formulated. The cost areas most particularly impacted are utilities, rent, and Inspectorate travel. We must bear in mind that chemical industry inspections as currently carried out are on-site activities that are not amenable to the remote or hybrid options open to other programmes. For instance, initially estimated costs for flights for mandated inspections to some States Parties have multiplied by several times. These costs cover travel fares only, and do not include quarantine-related costs for longer hotel stays. I urge States Parties with inspectable activities to show flexibility regarding alternative flight routes for inspections to allow for some cost efficiencies.
50. Looking forward, I am pleased to inform the Council that we have revamped the OPCW-The Hague Award, in close cooperation with the Municipality of the Hague, its co-sponsor. The award now comprises a category for young professionals. This will ensure its future viability, while at the same time serving as an outreach tool to the younger generation. The revised award was launched this month with a call for nominations. I urge States Parties to put forward suitable candidates for this prestigious prize.

51. The OPCW is a Nobel Prize-winning organisation. We must continue to live up to this high standard.
52. In this context, I express my deepest appreciation to the staff of the OPCW for their loyalty and dedication. For a quarter of a century, they have delivered, irrespective of the conditions. In particular, I wish to thank Ms Kayoko Gotoh, who was our Director of International Cooperation and Assistance until she left the Secretariat last May. I also wish to thank Ms Veronika Stromšíková, Director of the Office of Strategy and Policy, who will be leaving us this summer after six years of outstanding performance in the Secretariat. It is therefore the last Executive Council session for Director Stromšíková. The support and dedication of these Directors have been essential for the Secretariat to deliver upon the mandates that the States Parties have given to us. You will be missed, both at the Secretariat and within the community of delegates with whom you have developed trusted relations.
53. In closing, I wish you a short, positive, and productive session.

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