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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE
OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE
STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

First of all, on behalf of the Russian Federation, we would like to congratulate H.E. Mr. Vusimuzi Madonsela, the distinguished Ambassador of South Africa, on his election as Chairperson of the Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter “the Conference”) to the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”), and assure him of our readiness to cooperate constructively so that the work of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference is as effective as possible, based upon mutual respect among and due consideration for the interests of all States Parties of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

This past year, we celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry-into-force of the Convention. Since its establishment, the Organisation has achieved impressive results: a total of approximately 99% (over 71,500 tonnes) of the world’s chemical weapons stockpiles have been destroyed under its control. More than five years ago, the OPCW confirmed the destruction of the chemical stockpile of 40,000 tonnes that the Russian Federation inherited from the Soviet Union—and this was done three years ahead of schedule.

However, it must be said that in spite of these colossal efforts, we have not yet achieved our common ultimate goal of ridding the world of chemical weapons. The United States of America, the sole possessor State today, has been protracting country’s complete chemical demilitarisation in every possible way for a quarter of a century now.

In recent years, we have seen the increasingly politicised work of both the OPCW’s policy-making organs and its subsidiary bodies. In many respects, this was due to the fact that a group of States Parties belonging to the same military-political bloc had decided that the OPCW, contrary to its real mission, should become a tool for exerting pressure on countries they dislike. All the more often, the meetings of the OPCW’s policy-making organs have become marred by political debate, and less focused on tasks consistent with the Organisation’s technical mandate. Elements of political demagoguery are introduced even into the Organisation’s otherwise purely technical documents. This can clearly be seen in the OPCW’s 2021 Financial Statements of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Report of the External Auditor for the year ending at 31 December 2021. For example, they allegedly link the Organisation’s



financial difficulties in 2021 to the economic situation that did not even develop until 2022, referring to the special military operation in Ukraine that had not yet even begun.

The principle of consensus-based decision making was the first victim of the politicisation of the Organisation's work. The complete paralysis of the OPCW Eastern European Group (EEG)—caused by a number of countries that act on "take it or leave it" principle—is an illustrative example thereof. As a result, the EEG was unable to propose consensus-supported nominees for a number of positions in OPCW bodies.

In the absence of a system of checks and balances ensured by the consensus rule, a number of States have launched systematic efforts to erode the Organisation's technical mandate, by imposing decisions that go beyond its scope, punitive functions that are not characteristic of the OPCW, and openly subversive activities against some OPCW members.

The emerging and persistent chemical threat in Ukraine is a striking example. Beginning in December 2021, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation issued warnings of possible chemical provocations, recording incidents of chemically hazardous facilities used for military purposes by Ukrainian armed groups. The Russian Federation, through the Permanent Representation to the OPCW, has been communicating this evidence to the Director-General of the OPCW's Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") on an ongoing basis. Unfortunately, some of our warnings came to pass. Claims about the lack of evidence or the far-fetched nature of our statements do not stand up to criticism. The only logical explanation for this defiant disregard of objective data is that a deliberate information war is being waged.

The same applies to accusations in connection with the alleged "poisoning" of Alexei Navalny. All of our proposals to carry out thorough, fact- and evidence-based work that relies on meaningful cooperation among law enforcement agencies and medical institutions were rejected. Existing legal mechanisms for cooperation have been completely ignored. This is vividly illustrated by the so-called "Skripal case", with London still refusing to make any contact with Russia for five years. Instead of a civilized dialogue in The Hague, States Parties are aggressively being fed ideas about violations of the Convention that have allegedly taken place, and attempts are being made to force them to take their word for it.

The attempts by the Netherlands to restrict the work of the Russian diplomatic mission to the OPCW are in the same vein. The expulsion of Russian diplomats and impediments to the timely arrival of experts to participate in meetings of the policy-making organs of the OPCW is a gross violation by the Government of the Netherlands of its obligations under Article VIII of the Convention and the OPCW Headquarters Agreement. We call for the utmost attention to this issue, and call on the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to abandon the abuse of the right granted to it by the States Parties to host an international organisation on its territory.

The Russian Federation, a founding State of the Convention, is a responsible party to the international regime of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and fulfils its obligations under the Convention in good faith. It has a well-developed chemical industry and unprecedented research and medical capacities. Russia stands ready to make its contribution to all areas of the Organisation's activities. Attempts to limit Russia's role and push it to the sidelines of the OPCW are already eroding the chemical weapons non-proliferation architecture.

The same approach can be seen in relation to a number of other countries. Earlier, a large-scale aggressive campaign was launched against the Syrian Arab Republic. It was Syria's voluntary accession to the Convention that saved it from the barbaric influence of the West, in contrast to Iraq and Libya. However, the so-called “friends of Syria” now continue to use any excuse to make more and more far-fetched accusations against Damascus. Despite all the difficulties, the Syrian side continues to cooperate openly with the OPCW within the mechanisms set out in the Convention and the additional voluntary commitments it has undertaken. The Syrian authorities have shown unprecedented transparency with regard to the provision of documentation and an additional declaration of past activities in order to address the outstanding issues in Damascus’s initial declaration under the Convention.

We note with satisfaction the continued cooperation between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian National Authority. Nevertheless, we find it outrageous that the twenty-fifth round of consultations is conditioned on the participation of one particular expert of the Secretariat who does not have Syria’s full confidence. We urge the Secretariat to show flexibility and rely in this matter on the provisions of the Convention, which provide for the right of the Syrian Arab Republic to withdraw some individuals. We welcome the continuation of the dialogue on holding a meeting as soon as possible between Mr Arias, Director-General, and Mr Mekdad, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Russia has repeatedly spoken about the urgency of bringing the activities of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) investigating the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria fully into line with OPCW standards. We continue to insist that there is a need to put an end to the “office-based investigations” that are carried out without visiting incident sites and independent sampling by the inspectors of the Secretariat, and without complying with chain-of-custody procedures.

Separately, we would like to focus on the phenomenon of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which is not provided for in the mandate of the Organisation. Its activities go beyond the scope of the Convention and encroach upon the exclusive competence of the United Nations Security Council. We regard the decision to deprive Syria of its rights and privileges—which was pushed through based on the conclusions of the IIT in the style of “highly likely” and “reasonable grounds to believe”—exclusively as a cynical attack upon a sovereign State Party and in fact an act of undermining the efforts towards achieving universality of the Convention.

Within this context, we are opposed to the imposition of financial obligations on States Parties arising from the illegal activities of the attribution mechanism. We cannot agree with the approach of lumping together decisions related to the regular budget and provisions not related to the implementation of the Convention’s tasks running counter to the Financial Rules of the Organisation.

Another of our priorities is the real, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI of the Convention, which envisages building international cooperation in the field of the peaceful use of chemistry and the removal of barriers to the economic and technological development of countries. We call for the abandonment of the policy of economic strangulation of undesirables. The first step in this direction could be the removal of illegal unilateral sanctions, including in the chemical industry.

We urge all States Parties to bring the work of the OPCW back to a constructive and pragmatic direction—all the more so since there are solid examples of productive cooperation within the

Organisation. It was as a result of this kind of interaction that the Organisation was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013.

It is thanks to that collaboration that it was possible to draw up the principles for the appointment of the External Auditor. This approach is especially important as we begin the concrete work of preparing for the fifth review cycle of the Convention, during which the work programme and new priorities are to be discussed. As the destruction of stockpiles of chemical weapons comes to an end, one of the priorities will be strengthening the effectiveness of the verification regime in the face of rapid scientific and technological developments as a key to preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

The Russian Federation is fully invested in ensuring that the OPCW, given its unique nature, remains effective and able to respond promptly and adequately to new challenges and threats, to conduct its activities on a depoliticised basis, and to take decisions on all issues by consensus. We are certain that all these are realistic and achievable tasks in the run-up to the forthcoming Fifth Review Conference to be held in 2023.

I request that this statement be distributed as an official document of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference and made available on Catalyst and the OPCW website.

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