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STATE OF PALESTINE

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR RAWAN SULAIMAN PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STATE OF PALESTINE TO THE OPCW AT THE FIFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO REVIEW THE OPERATION OF THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

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

May peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you.

Allow me at the outset to congratulate H.E. Ambassador Hank Van Der Kwast, the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the OPCW, in his capacity as Chairperson of the Fifth Review Conference. We express our confidence in his leadership to steer this session towards achieving its desired objectives. We also 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-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties, H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Madonsela of South Africa, for his dedicated efforts during that session.

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. Furthermore, we would like to express our gratitude to the Chairperson of the Open-ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference, Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of the Republic of Estonia, for his dedicated efforts in preparing the Draft Provisional Text of the Fifth Review Conference.

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

This day on which we inaugurate our current session coincides with the 75th anniversary of the Nakba, the Nakba of the Palestinian people. This year, the anniversary is different as it comes



amid the issuance of a United Nations resolution to commemorate the Nakba in the United Nations General Assembly hall. This constitutes a recognition by the United Nations of this catastrophe, this human tragedy, and the ethnic cleansing to which our Palestinian people were subjected and which continues until this day. It is a crime against humanity and a systematic crime committed by the Zionist gangs, Israel, and their accomplices. As a result of this crime, 950,000 Palestinians, or 65% of the total Palestinian people at the time, were forcibly displaced from their lands and original homes and turned into refugees against whom many mass massacres were committed during which tens of thousands of Palestinians, the original owners of the land, were slaughtered and killed in 1948. More than 531 of their cities and villages were destroyed. Moreover, the continuation of this Nakba and the human tragedy and persecution for over 75 years, and 56 years of colonial occupation, is a disgrace to humanity. This crime, like other crimes against humanity and crimes committed against peoples, is imprescriptible. However, with the determination, persistence, and steadfastness of our people, we will achieve our hopes and aspirations for the return, freedom, independence, and liberation of the State of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Israel, the occupying power, which possesses all kinds of weapons of mass destruction, including a massive stockpile of chemical weapons, continues to use its settlements established on the occupied Palestinian territory as illegal industrial zones, including chemical factories that directly affect the lives and health of our people. This is because there is no international control whatsoever over what these illegal factories produce. Claiming support for the Chemical Weapons Convention is not limited to giving speeches and debates or donating small amounts of money to support activities here or there, with the aim of suggesting that the Israeli occupation is supportive of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Instead, serious, tangible steps must be taken and Israel must stop using various types of weapons against the defenceless Palestinian people and accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Signing the Convention without joining it grants Israel some rights but does not subject it to any obligations, thus keeping it immune to and protected from all forms of accountability.

Furthermore, Israel, the colonial and apartheid power, uses chemical weapons against the Palestinian people and in peaceful protests. It has also used white phosphorous against our people in the Gaza Strip. I invite you, Mr Chairperson and Mr Director-General of our Organisation, to take the necessary measures to ensure accountability of Israel and its various tools, including settlers and the occupation army, for their use of banned chemicals against our people, and for the terrorist acts perpetrated by terrorist settlers in the occupied West Bank, as well as for incidents such as the burning of the Hawara area near Nablus.

Universality is a key aspect of the Convention. The achievements made in this regard, with the number of States Parties now totalling 193 and representing 98% of the world population, are evidence of its international standing and the large support for its lofty objectives. This helps strengthen States Parties' security and maintain international peace and security. It is a protection guaranteed by international law. A threat to an individual is a threat to humanity as a whole. From this perspective, the State of Palestine firmly believes that achieving true peace in the Middle East begins with making this region free of all types of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons. Hence, my delegation reaffirms its principled position concerning the banning and elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, under strict and effective international control. We also stress that the existence and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction constitutes a major threat to international peace and security and that the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention contributes directly to regional and international peace and security.

There is need for continuous support for the Organisation's efforts to achieve significant progress in all aspects of international cooperation and capacity-building activities, in implementation of Articles VII and X of the Convention, and those required in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under the Convention, which aim to increase the technological development of all States Parties.

The State of Palestine welcomes the establishment of the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology, which was inaugurated on 12 May 2023, and supports the strengthening of capacity-building for States Parties through expanding international cooperation and assistance programmes and solidifying scientific and academic partnerships in the field of chemical activities for peaceful purposes, within the activities of the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology.

In this context, the State of Palestine, through the Fifth Review Conference, calls for the strengthening of international cooperation on peaceful uses within the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention, based on the principle of the inalienable right of States Parties granted by the Chemical Weapons Convention to use science and technology in the field of chemistry for peaceful purposes. Article XI of the Convention stipulates that "the provisions of this Convention shall be implemented in a manner which avoids hampering the economic or technological development of States Parties, and international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under this Convention including the international exchange of scientific and technical information and chemicals and equipment for the production, processing or use of chemicals for purposes not prohibited by this Convention".

Despite the progress made in the implementation of Article XI of the Convention, over the past 26 years, and since the entry into force of the Convention, and in light of the concerted efforts made by the States Parties and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, with a focus on three main areas, including integrated chemical management, enhancing laboratory capabilities, and promoting and exchanging chemical sciences, the State of Palestine still believes in the importance of providing support through international cooperation to the newly acceding countries to fulfil their obligations towards the Convention and the Organisation, in a manner which enhances cooperation among all regions.

On the other hand, international cooperation on peaceful uses of chemistry still faces great challenges. Developing countries face disproportionately restricted access to materials, equipment, and technology for peaceful purposes. Some countries have overextended the concept of national security for ideological purposes and misused export controls for the purpose of non-proliferation, which has greatly undermined the peaceful uses and related international cooperation. The drafting of the action plan for the implementation of Article XI called for by developing countries has not yet materialised. Efforts fall significantly short of implementing the resolution entitled "Components of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI of the Convention", which was adopted during the Sixteenth Session of the Conference. Since 2011, the Conference has not taken any new decisions on the implementation of Article XI of the Convention. International cooperation is facing challenges due to insufficient momentum and inputs required to achieve tangible results in this regard.

We appreciate the efforts made so far by the facilitator for Article XI of the Convention. We encourage the continuation of comprehensive communication and constructive cooperation with all States Parties. We note with appreciation that the drafting committee has

completed its work of streamlining the list of ideas from the aforementioned review and evaluation workshops. We look forward to fruitful discussions in the ongoing facilitations under Article XI of the Convention.

The State of Palestine highly appreciates the technical nature of the OPCW's work. Therefore, we call on 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 among all States Parties are the best way to help us achieve the aspirations of this Organisation and its Convention.

The OPCW has achieved tremendous success thanks to the continuous support of the 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, actions, 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 play its role in helping the States Parties that lack adequate resources obtain appropriate assistance and technical support so that they can fully implement the Convention.

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 instruments prohibiting weapons of mass destruction. There is a moral and legal necessity 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 wish 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 on Catalyst.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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