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STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MINAMI HIROSHI PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF JAPAN TO THE OPCW AT THE FIFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO REVIEW THE OPERATION OF THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

First of all, I would like to congratulate H.E. Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast of the Netherlands on your assumption as Chairperson of this Fifth Review Conference (RC5), and to assure you of our support as one of the Vice-Chairpersons of the Fifth Review Conference.

I would also like to express my gratitude to H.E. Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia for his dedication as Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of this Review Conference (OEWG-RC). H.E. Ambassador Kuusing's creative thematic approach led to his draft provisional text that will serve as a good base for the outcome document of this Conference.

The Convention has made significant contributions to promoting international peace and security by progressing chemical disarmament, preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons, and supporting the full and effective implementation of the Convention by international cooperation and assistance. I would like to commend Director-General Fernando Arias and the staff of the Secretariat.

This year is a milestone for the Convention, which marks the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Convention. The Fifth Review Conference will take place this year when the completion of the destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles is expected and the inauguration of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology for the future of the OPCW took place on 13 May 2023.

Amidst the ever-changing security environment and the developments in science and technology, the OPCW remains fit for purpose in order to effectively tackle the threats posed by the use of chemical weapons. The States Parties should review the activities of the OPCW in the past five years and set out the future objectives and course of the OPCW at this Review Conference.

I would like to review some key aspects of the activities based on the Convention for the last five years.



For the last five years, steady progress has been made with the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles. Japan welcomes the completion of the destruction of over 99% of the total of declared Category 1 chemical weapons.

The abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs) project is one of the most important issues in the Convention for Japan. This project has unprecedented difficulties, but Japan has made the utmost efforts, by investing enormous human and financial resources, for the progress of the destruction of ACWs in China. Japan makes maximum efforts by continuing the introduction of new facilities even though we had been forced to temporarily postpone all ACW destruction activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last October, the destruction plan beyond the year 2022 that Japan and China jointly made, was adopted at the 101st Session of the Council. We are determined to make the fullest efforts to achieve the completion of the destruction of ACWs as early as possible in accordance with this destruction plan which is agreed to be accomplished by the efforts of the both sides.

I would like to reiterate that any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances is unacceptable, and those responsible must be held accountable. However, it is regrettable that there have been disturbing cases including the chemical weapons use in Syria in light of these fundamental principles over the last five years. Next, looking ahead to the future of the OPCW, all States Parties should confirm their adherence to these fundamental principles once again.

I would like to state some key aspects regarding the outlook for future activities.

With the end of the destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles, the OPCW's mission will further shift to preventing re-emergence, with even more emphasis on strengthening the verification regime. The submission of full, accurate, and timely declarations is a prerequisite for effective verification systems, and thus assistance is required to meet the needs. Compared to 26 years ago when the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force, the chemical industry has been growing in the world. Keeping in mind the purpose of Article XI of the Convention, the Secretariat and the States Parties need to continue the constant consideration of the effectiveness and efficiency of the verification regime without placing undue burdens on industry. At the same time, it is important to enhance the capabilities of the Secretariat such as the training of inspectors. The Secretariat needs to maintain its verification-related expertise for the accession of new States as possessor States.

For the sake of international peace and security, it is extremely important to prevent the proliferation of toxic chemicals and their equipment and techniques to either states of concern or non-State actors. Full, universal, and effective implementation of the Convention will lead to completely excluding the possibility of the use of chemical weapons. In particular, it is indispensable to enhance capabilities of national implementation under Article VII. Law enforcement bodies, which enhance their capabilities by the steady progress of national implementation, are expected to effectively conduct regulation, monitoring and control of the illegal trade in "dual-use" chemicals. Furthermore, the enhancement of protective capabilities and networks of law enforcement bodies for Article X, as well as the network of designated laboratories, are important in terms of effective protection and deterrence against the use of chemical weapons. In addition to the effective assistance by the Secretariat for these efforts, enhancing the capabilities of the Secretariat against the use, or threat of use, of chemical weapons, under Articles IX and X, is essential.

In this regard, Japan expects that a wide range of meaningful activities, which will enhance both the Secretariat's expertise and States Parties' capacity building, will be held at the Centre for Technology and Chemistry.

Measures for universality are required now more than ever to close geographical loopholes by integrating the States not Party—namely the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Israel, and South Sudan—into the framework of the Convention, early and without any precondition. It is important for the Secretariat to maintain its expertise related to verification activities for the accession of new States Parties which may accede to the Convention as possessor States.

The aforementioned future roles of the OPCW, ranging from verification to international cooperation and assistance, cannot be achieved without financial support. Japan once again calls for the States Parties in arrears, particularly those that are two or more years in arrears, to complete their payments in full at the earliest possible date.

In the face of global inflation and limited resources, Japan encourages the Secretariat to consider a mechanism ensuring the effective use of resources, which serves for better implementation of results-based management (RBM). RBM, including through needs assessments, monitoring, evaluation, impact studies, and meaningful key performance indicators, is essential for increasing effectiveness, efficiency, the sustainability of capacity-development activities and optimising resource use. The Secretariat is requested to pursue a more systematic application of RBM. In this context, it is also important to evaluate the implementation of the Biennial Programme and Budget introduced last year and to improve the budgetary process for the next cycle of the Biennial Programme and Budget.

Japan invites the Secretariat to continue its efforts to become a more effective and efficient organisation, which is composed of highly qualified professionals that ensure geographical diversity and gender balance while reinforcing knowledge management.

I would like to call on all the States Parties and the Secretariat to unite and cooperate for the Convention and the OPCW to keep adapting, to achieve our common goal of realising a world where the possibility of the use of chemical weapons is completely excluded.

Lastly, Japan assumes the G7 Presidency this year, and is leading the discussion of the Chemical Security Working Group of the G7 Global Partnership on preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons that aims to strengthen and support the Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW. Japan has been serving as a member of the United Nations Security Council where the Secretariat of the OPCW provides its reports on the progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. Japan continues to proactively contribute to the discussion on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of Syria, which takes place in the United Nations Security Council.