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NORWAY

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ANNIKEN R. KRUTNES PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NORWAY TO THE OPCW AT THE EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES

First of all let me thank the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Peter Goosen of South Africa, for the work he has done throughout the past year. I also congratulate you, Ambassador Sa'ad Abdul Majeed Ibrahim Al Ali of Iraq, on being elected as Chair of the Eighteenth Session of the Conference of States Parties. We look forward to cooperating with you, and ensure you of Norway's full support in addressing the tasks before us.

Norway has aligned itself with the EU statement. I would, however, like to highlight a few issues of particular importance to Norway.

Mr Chairperson,

This year has been a challenging and eventful year for the OPCW. Some events have been gratifying while others have been tragic. Norway was deeply outraged by the chemical weapons attack which took place in Ghouta on 21 August, killing large numbers of civilians and causing terrible suffering. We have been reminded of the disastrous humanitarian consequences of any use of chemical weapons. Norway continues to stress that those responsible must be held accountable.

The elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme represents the biggest challenge faced by this Organisation in its 16 years of existence. Strong dedication is needed from technicians and politicians, inspectors and diplomats alike. Thanks to tireless efforts by the Russian Federation and the United States of America a framework was created for the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme. Building on this, the Executive Council of the OPCW and the Security Council of the United Nations have taken important decisions setting out the conditions and timelines for destruction. In the meantime, important work has been carried out on the ground in Syria.

Let me take this opportunity to once again extend my Government's sincere thanks and respect to the Director-General, the Technical Secretariat and the OPCW-UN Joint Mission for the outstanding work they are performing in extremely demanding conditions.

Norway is strongly committed to supporting the implementation of the decisions on Syria. We have made a commitment to offer in kind support to the maritime operation bringing the weapons out of Syria. In addition, Norway is pledging up to USD 15 million to the UN and



OPCW trust funds. We call on other States Parties in a position to do so to make contributions as well.

Much of our time and attention during the last months has been devoted to dealing with the chemical weapons in Syria. While this constitutes the most important task for this Organisation in the near future, it is vital that we do not lose sight of other tasks lying before us. In April we successfully completed the Third Review Conference. The outcome of this Conference identified several important goals and challenges ahead that require our attentive follow-up.

First and foremost we underline the importance of completing the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles, and urge the remaining possessor States to strive towards completing their obligations as mandated by the Convention in an expedient and transparent manner.

Norway is encouraged by the developments in the direction of universality over the past year. While this is an important step forward, we must continue to strive towards full universality. We urge all the remaining States not Party to ratify or accede and become members of the OPCW. Norway is prepared to offer its assistance in this regard.

As one, or hopefully several more States not Party join the Convention, there will be an increased need for verification. It is crucial that the OPCW maintains the necessary capacity for current and future tasks. Norway emphasises the importance for the Secretariat to maintain verification expertise relating to chemical weapons. This will help ensure a high standard of readiness to conduct challenge inspections or investigations of alleged use while also supporting the goal of maintaining the OPCW as the world's knowledge repository in the field of chemical weapons. In this connection Norway has, together with Bulgaria, South Africa and Sweden proposed a decision at the Executive Council aimed at allowing the Director-General to rehire OPCW inspectors. We encourage you all to support this.

The fact that only about half of all States Parties have fully implemented Article VII is a challenge to the Convention's effectiveness and credibility. We welcome the development of a tailor-made approach by the Technical Secretariat and look forward to it progressing further. National implementation is essential for preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons, including chemical terrorism.

Norway recognises that some Member States need international assistance to ensure full implementation of the Convention. This issue is closely related to national capacity building and technological development in areas related to the peaceful use of chemistry, and hence to the implementation of Article XI. Fostering international cooperation in this field is an important goal of the Convention, and for many States Parties a major incentive to stay engaged with the OPCW. It is imperative that we fully implement the decision on Article XI taken at the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of States Parties. This will also strengthen the various programmes related to international cooperation and assistance (ICA), which remain fundamental to overall implementation of the Convention.

At the Review Conference, the States Parties took a landmark decision when they finally gave civil society a platform at the Chemical Weapons Convention. We are very pleased that the current Session of the Conference has continued this positive trend. Norway has actively promoted increased interaction between the OPCW and civil society and we will continue to do so. External stakeholders, such as chemical industry associations, non-governmental

organisations, think-tanks, academia and others can provide valuable ideas and input to the advancement of the Convention. At the same time, engaging the scientific community could help to ensure that its members do not inadvertently contribute to proliferation or other hostile purposes. This is why education and outreach is so important, and we strongly support the intention of the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat to enhance efforts related to this in the near future.

Norway still supports the goal of establishing a discussion on the use of toxic chemicals for law enforcement, so-called Incapacitating Chemical Agents. We came very close to agreeing on this at the Review Conference, and many delegations have expressed positive interest in the subject. We encourage a debate under the auspices of the Executive Council or in any other appropriate OPCW forum at the earliest convenience, to identify possible measures that can help increase transparency and build confidence on this subject.

Mr Chairperson,

While acknowledging that we still have some way to go before the Convention is fully implemented, and in the midst of challenging times, we ought to take some time to recognise the perhaps most joyous event this past year: the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the OPCW. This is a great honour for this organisation. We especially want to congratulate the Director-General and all other staff members at the Technical Secretariat. The Prize ought to serve as an inspiration for our further work towards a world free of chemical weapons, and as an acknowledgement of the contribution to global peacekeeping efforts which the OPCW constitutes.

Finally, may I request that this statement be treated as an official document of the Eighteenth Session of the Conference of States Parties.

Thank you.

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