

OPCW/CSP-19 – National Statement of Portugal

Thank you Madam Chairperson,

Let me start by congratulating you for your election as Chair of the Conference of States Parties and by expressing our confidence in your abilities to lead our work successfully. We wish you all the best in your term of office.

Madam Chairperson,

Portugal fully aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by Mr. Jacek Bylica on behalf of the European Union. We would like nevertheless to come back to an aspect in particular of that statement.

Since CSP-18, Syria has remained at the top of the OPCW agenda, consuming a substantial part of its time and resources, both technically and at the level of the Policy-Making Organs. Inclusive, an OPCW technical mission to Syria was the target of an armed attack that could well have cost the lives of its members.

Over the same period, a vast international operation with the objective of eliminating the Syrian chemical weapons programme has taken place. This operation, not yet finished, has involved complex logistical and technical means, as well as huge costs.

As far as the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme is concerned, while recognizing that significant progress has been achieved despite very difficult circumstances, it would be an easy mistake to conclude that the job is done.

The complexity of the process itself and the delays and uncertainties that have characterized it up to now, coupled with the exceptional circumstances of the accession of Syria to the Chemical Weapons Convention, continue to be a source of concern to the International Community and require the continuation of a close monitoring by the OPCW.

In particular, the disturbing reports of the OPCW Fact Finding Mission in Syria add to the climate of uncertainty, as well as the growing delay in the destruction of the remaining chemical weapons production facilities and the gaps and inconsistencies that keep surfacing in the Syrian declaration. It would also be reassuring to receive a clear sign from Syria as to how it intends to discharge itself of its responsibilities with regard to the costs of the elimination of its chemical weapons programme and verification thereof.

In short, Syria must give full evidence of having irrevocably abandoned its chemical weapons programme, not least by showing concrete and sustainable progress in relation to the issues mentioned above.

In this context, we welcome the appointment of the experienced Ambassador and our former colleague José Artur Medeiros as Special Advisor of the DG to Syria and wish him *boa sorte* – good luck – in his endeavors.

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Conference.

Thank you MadamChairperson.