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**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
AMBASSADOR FRANCESCO AZZARELLO OF ITALY TO THE
TWENTIETH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES ON THE
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
ON THE PERFORMANCE OF ITS ACTIVITIES**

Mr Chairperson, distinguished delegates,

It is a privilege and an honour for me to report to the Conference of the States Parties on the work of the Executive Council. Before doing so, however, I wish to extend to you and to the Vice-Chairpersons my warm congratulations on your election.

Dear Eduardo, warmest congratulations also on behalf of the Italian Government, since it is the first time I take the floor.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the Vice-Chairpersons of the Council for actively facilitating the work on the issues under their respective clusters, and the Regional Coordinators and facilitators for their valuable contributions throughout the reporting period.

My sincere appreciation and warm thanks also go to the Technical Secretariat for its usual high professionalism and smooth action led by the Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, ensuring the highest quality of support and advice to the Council. Warm thanks also to the specific structure within the Technical Secretariat that assists the Chairperson of the Executive Council, Mr Gavrilov and his team.

Distinguished delegates, you have before you the Report of the Executive Council on the performance of its activities in the period from 12 July 2014 to 9 July 2015.

After the cut-off date of the report, the Council had its Eightieth regular session in October and one additional meeting a week ago on the latest reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria. Let me briefly go through the matters that were taken up by the Council at these meetings that relate to the work of the Conference, or those which derive from its mandates.

The Eightieth Session of the Executive Council: Main Issues

The Eightieth Session of the Executive Council, that took place from 6 to 8 October 2015, was a very fruitful session. The Council successfully took actions on most of the items on its agenda and was able to complete its work a day early. The Council oversaw the implementation of the Convention by examining the periodic reports provided by the



Director-General on verification activities, international cooperation and assistance, universality of the Convention, the national implementation measures, the reports on the status of implementation of the international Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons and on the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Council adopted seven decisions and forwarded five of them for consideration and adoption by the Conference at its Twentieth Session. These are as follows:

- (a) The draft Programme and Budget for 2016;
- (b) Additional Guidelines on the designation of laboratories for the analysis of authentic samples;
- (c) Designation of laboratories for the analysis of authentic biomedical samples and guidelines for the conduct of biomedical proficiency tests;
- (d) Establishment of an Advisory Board on Education and Outreach; and
- (e) Establishment of a Special Fund for OPCW Special Missions and withholding of the distribution of the cash surplus for 2013.

The Council also noted the “Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team Covering the Period April 2014 to September 2015”. Following the statements by several States Parties on the matter, the Council underscored the substantial unresolved issues, including the gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies identified by the Secretariat in its report and stressed the importance of fully verifying that the declaration and related submissions of the Syrian Arab Republic are accurate and complete, as required by the Convention and the relevant decision of the Executive Council. The Council requested the Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic to expedite their efforts to resolve these gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies and further requested that the Director-General provide a report to the Council before its Eighty-First Session that details all unresolved issues, in particular specifying those for which no further progress has been possible.

Distinguished delegates, as you see the Eightieth Session of the Executive Council was a fruitful one. I would like to stress that with the strong determination and the spirit of consultation and compromise demonstrated by its members, the Council once again succeeded in concluding its work on the basis of consensus. I would like to express once again my sincere gratitude to my fellow Council members.

The Fiftieth Meeting of the Executive Council: Main Issues

Let me now turn to the outcome of the Eightieth Meeting of the Executive Council that took place last Monday, 23 November. During the meeting, the Technical Secretariat briefed the Council on the latest three reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria.

In addition, the Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, provided to the Council an update on recent developments including the operationalisation of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism that was established under United Nations Security Council resolution 2235 (2015) with the mandate to identify, to the greatest extent feasible,

individuals, entities, groups or Governments perpetrating, organising, sponsoring or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Following the extensive general debate on the matter, during which thirty-eight States Parties made statements, with some diverse views being expressed, the Council adopted by consensus a decision expressing grave concern regarding the findings of the Fact-Finding Mission that chemical weapons have once again been used in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Council reaffirmed its condemnation, in the strongest possible terms, of the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances. It emphasised that any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time by anyone under any circumstances, is unacceptable and would violate international law. The Council also expressed its strong conviction that those individuals responsible for the use of chemical weapons should be held accountable.

I thank you very much for your attention, and I wish the Conference a successful conclusion of its Twentieth Session.

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