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Statement  
by  
Ambassador Jonghyun Choe  
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea  
at the 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of States Parties to the CWC  
The Hague, 1 December 2015

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating Your Excellency on your election as the Chair of this session. My thanks go to our outgoing Chair, Her Excellency Ambassador Vesela KORAC for her dedication and achievements. I would like to express my appreciation also to Director-General Ambassador Ahmet Uzümcü for his tireless efforts in the noble endeavors under the framework of the OPCW.

Since September 2013 the international community has been working together with the purpose of eliminating Syria's chemical weapons program. Our joint efforts have led to considerable progress with the destruction of Syria's declared chemical weapons and its 12 chemical weapons production facilities.

Despite the achievements made, however, my delegation is deeply concerned over the findings of the Fact-Finding Mission that chemical weapons have once again been used in the Syrian Arab Republic. With respect to the incident in Marea, it has been confirmed that at least two people were exposed to sulfur mustard and, according to the Fact-Finding Mission report, it is likely that the effects of sulfur mustard resulted in the death of an infant. The report also concluded one or more toxic chemicals –probably containing chlorine– were used as weapons in the Idlib Governorate of the Syrian Arab Republic between 1 March and May this year.

My delegation reiterates its position that any perpetrators, organizers and sponsors or otherwise involved in the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable and all the States Parties should work together closely to this end, including the Syrian Arab Republic.

In this regard, my delegation welcomes the start of the full operation of the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism this November and supports the continuous work of the Fact Finding Mission and Declaration Assessment Team of the OPCW.

At its 50th Meeting, the Executive Council adopted the decision by consensus on further reports of the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria. The Republic of Korea supports this decision and will continue to extend its full cooperation to the Fact-Finding Mission to ensure the safe and effective completion of its crucial task.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation is gravely concerned over the recent report that terrorist groups, including ISIL, may have acquired chemical agents that can be used as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and elsewhere. Considering the increasing threat posed by non-state actors and the dual nature of chemical agents, it is also imperative to strengthen physical protection of chemical facilities and laboratories. In this regard, tightening export control is another crucial element. I would like to point out that the prevention of the hostile use of toxic chemicals as weapons by non-State actors should be one of our priorities.

Enhancing the capability of the organization to address challenges in an ever-changing security environment and in the midst of constant advances in the field of science and technology is a key future task of the OPCW. It is crucial that we constantly review and modernize the management of chemical materials and appropriately reflect new developments in the use of chemistry, including new types of potential chemical weapons agents. In this regard, my delegation shares the concern raised by some like-minded States Parties over central nervous system(CNS)-acting agents. There is a need to launch discussions on how to address these agents, which could pose a challenge to the very purpose of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

International cooperation, especially on capacity building and establishing appropriate national regulations, is another important pillar for a stronger CWC regime. The Republic of Korea has actively joined the concerted efforts to strengthen international cooperation and assistance. The Korean Government has hosted the 'International Assistance and Protection Course' in Seoul since 2005 and sponsored various workshops and training courses for Asian countries with the OPCW.

In particular, this October, 36 experts from 21 Asian countries including Myanmar joined the Seoul Workshop on the Peaceful Development and Use of Chemistry. The Seoul Workshop has now been held for four consecutive years. The Republic of Korea will continue to cooperate with the OPCW and other Member States for the sharing of our experience in the area of the peaceful development and use of chemical technology, thereby contributing to the faithful implementation of the Convention.

ORGANIZATION FOR THE PROHIBITION  
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation notes with appreciation the Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2016 which seeks to make the best use of its budget with balanced distribution of financial resources among the seven programs. For the effective use of the budget, the Secretariat should introduce a mechanism for regular review and assessment of its various programs in order to allow for reprioritization.

My delegation notes with concern the outlook that the Secretariat will continue to face budgetary restrictions in 2016. This is largely due to the fact that some States Parties are still in arrears in the payment of their assessed contribution and some States have yet to pay their reimbursement dues arising in connection with the verification activities. There is a need for appropriate steps by the States Parties concerned to remedy this situation.

Mr. Chairman,

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the first large-scale use of chlorine in leper during the First World War. If we are to prevent the use of chemical weapons, achieving universal adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention is an utmost priority. My delegation welcomes the accession of Myanmar and Angola to the Convention and urges the few countries remaining outside the Convention, including North Korea, to follow suit without any delay or precondition. In this regard, I greatly value the tireless efforts by the Secretariat for the universalization of the Convention.

In conclusion, I would like to request that this statement be treated as an official document of the 20th Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

I thank you.