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**SWITZERLAND**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR URS BREITER  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SWITZERLAND TO THE OPCW AT THE  
TWENTITH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairman,

The Swiss delegation would like to join previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as Chairperson of the Twentieth Conference of the States Parties. You can count on the full support and cooperation of this delegation in the fulfilment of your duties.

I would also like to congratulate Myanmar and Angola on their accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention. In this context, I wish to thank the Director-General for his tireless efforts in the field of universality and to invite all States not Party to ratify the Convention without delay and preconditions.

Earlier this year, the city of Ypres commemorated the hundredth anniversary of the first large-scale use of chemical weapons. Besides honouring the victims of these tragic events, the ceremony reminded the world that despite the horrors committed one hundred years ago, and despite the tremendous efforts by this Organisation and its Member States, the use of chemical weapons continues – as the conclusions of the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in the Syrian Arab Republic confirm.

These conclusions are of grave concern to my country. Switzerland strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances. The use of chemical weapons is a serious violation of international law. The international community needs to take consistent action to ensure accountability and bring those responsible on all sides of the conflict to justice. Furthermore, it is of utmost importance to prevent any further such violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Switzerland welcomes the fact that the Security Council recognised the need for accountability. Resolution 2235 (2015), that establishes an OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism to identify those responsible, is an important step to hold individuals accountable for these crimes regardless of their allegiance. Switzerland will lend its full support to the Investigative Mechanism and the OPCW's other ongoing missions. In this context, I would like to note that Switzerland will contribute financially to the dedicated trust funds established by the OPCW and the United Nations in support of resolution 2235 (2015).

Moreover, my delegation commends the work of both the Fact-Finding Mission and the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). Through its efforts, the DAT was able to bring to light



the discordances and inconsistencies of the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration. Both the FFM's and the DAT's reports raise a number of disturbing questions that the Syrian Government needs to address before this Organisation and the international community without any further delay. We therefore call on the Syrian authorities to intensify their cooperation with the OPCW and to honour the assurances given.

The OPCW has proven time and again its indispensable value when it comes to building a world free of chemical weapons. In order to live up to this challenging task and ensure that the use of toxic chemicals for hostile purposes will never re-emerge, the OPCW must be prepared for the future and be provided with the necessary means, resources and workforce.

In the framework of the reflections on the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons, we reiterate our conviction for the necessity to launch a discussion on central nervous system-acting chemicals. In collaboration with Australia, our delegation invited several regional groups to take part in informal briefings concerning these chemicals. We support the joint paper of the Australian delegation and will jointly hold a side event on this issue on Tuesday at 1 p.m. in the Europe room, to which all delegations are cordially invited. My country is committed to examining ways forward to initiate a comprehensive and focused debate within the OPCW's policy-making organs on CNS-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes, with the aim of enhancing transparency and confidence among States Parties.

The convergence of biology and chemistry is another ground-breaking development in science and technology that poses significant challenges to the Chemical Weapons Convention and its future relevance. With regard to such advances, we invite the Director-General to make available the Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board in official sessions of future Conferences of the States Parties for briefings of States Parties on relevant developments in science and technology.

Education and outreach also play an essential role in terms of prevention, a task this Organisation will have to concentrate on even more intensively in the coming years. The establishment of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach represents a very positive development in the eyes of this delegation.

Finally, the issue of arrears is a constant concern in particular because of the liquidity problems it generates. My delegation urges once again all States Parties to pay their contributions without delay and for those concerned, the costs related to verification activities. Should these calls remain unanswered, a reflection on more binding measures should take place.

Thank you.