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SWEDEN

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CONVENTION NATIONAL AUTHORITY
AT THE TWENTIETH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Chairperson,

Let me first of all welcome you to the chair of this Twentieth Conference of the States Parties, which takes place in a particularly sombre time in the history of the Convention. Sweden aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I will limit myself to the following additional points in my national capacity.

Chlorine gas was first employed in the trenches on 22 April 1915, and sulfur mustard followed two years later, in July 1917. Sweden is appalled that, 100 years later, we have witnessed the use of both these substances in the horrific civil war in the Syrian Arab Republic, and allegedly also in Iraq. Weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorist criminals - long seen as a worst-case scenario - now appear a reality. And the Syrian regime is implicated in the same type of heinous acts as the terrorists, and in a larger number of incidents. Sweden welcomes the decision of the United Nations Security Council to establish a Joint Investigative Mechanism that will seek to identify the perpetrators behind these inhumane and unlawful attacks, and decided last week to contribute SEK 2 million to the United Nations trust fund for JIM. We commend the important work conducted by the men and women of the OPCW Fact-Finding Missions, oftentimes under very difficult field conditions.

Let me now turn to chemical weapons disarmament – a particular priority to my government. While the end seems to be in sight, more than six thousand metric tonnes of declared chemical weapons still remain to be destroyed before this fundamental treaty obligation is fully implemented. We welcome that the stockpiles have been accounted for as destroyed at all but one destruction facility in the Russian Federation – including the Shchuch'ye facility following technical cooperation with Sweden. We also welcome the completion of Category 1 chemical weapons destruction in Libya. Nevertheless, destruction remains overdue, and we are concerned with the repeated delays. Sweden therefore renews its call on the Russian Federation and the United States of America, as well as Libya, to expedite destruction in accordance with the Convention and decisions of the Conference of the States Parties.

Sweden also welcomes progress achieved with regards to the OPCW's verification of the completeness of the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declarations on chemical weapons, and



calls on the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the Declaration Assessment Team in dealing with the remaining outstanding issues.

To mark the centennial of chemical weapons use in World War I, Sweden, in cooperation with Green Cross International, hosted a panel discussion at the General Assembly First Committee in New York last month with Dr Åke Sellström, Dr Paul Walker and Deputy Director-General Hamid Ali Rao, followed by the screening of the excellent documentary “Winds of Chemical Warfare” – directed by Fabienne Lips-Dumas, who also participated in the event. We are pleased that this film will be screened once more on Thursday in the Ieper room, and encourage delegates to attend that event.

As of May next year, Sweden will serve for two years in the Executive Council of the OPCW. As stated by Special Envoy Jacek Bylica on behalf of the European Union, we expect the run-up to the Fourth Review Conference to provide an important opportunity to consider the future role and priorities of the OPCW, and we are looking forward to taking active part in that process. Let me make a few points:

1. First, the key to the future relevance of this Nobel Prize winning institution will surely be its continued ability to deal effectively with contingencies, as evidenced by the recent cases of Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic. And the most important resource at the disposal of the OPCW to fulfil this charge is its designated inspectors. Sweden welcomes the decision of the Nineteenth Conference of the States Parties to allow for the rehiring of experienced inspectors. We encourage the Technical Secretariat to implement that decision in a manner that promotes its intended aims.
2. Second, the Syrian Arab Republic crisis has clearly validated all the hard work carried out in establishing the OPCW network of designated laboratories. The network, including, I am proud to say, the facility of the Swedish Defence Research Agency in Umeå, has played an indispensable role both in the United Nations investigation and in the work conducted since then by the OPCW. Sweden supports the proposal to initiate a designation scheme for bio-medical samples. However, we think it will be necessary to revise the procedures so that laboratories participating in networks for both environmental and bio-medical samples do not incur unreasonable costs. The network for environmental samples is now mature, and procedures could safely be amended with this in mind.
3. Third, international cooperation, in particular with regard to assistance and protection and national implementation, will continue to be an important OPCW activity. Earlier this year, Sweden hosted chemists from 19 countries who participated in the “Analytical Skills Development Course” at the Swedish Defence Research Agency. The participants learned how to analyse chemical-warfare agents, degradation products and other scheduled compounds in environmental samples, and gained practical skills in the field of analytical chemistry.
4. Fourth, Sweden welcomes the new impetus instilled in the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, under the able leadership of Ambassador Aido of Ghana, and the setting up of the new sub-working group. Against the background of recent events, we feel that the time is ripe to consider a possible role for the OPCW in assisting

States Parties that wish to strengthen national controls over toxic chemicals, in order to prevent these from falling into the wrong hands.

In conclusion, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all delegates and civil society to attend a side event that Sweden is hosting, in cooperation with the United States Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, entitled "Detection of Chlorine Gas Poisoning: Current Issues". The event will take place on Wednesday lunchtime, in the Europe Room here at the World Forum.

Thank you Chairperson.

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