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FINLAND

**STATEMENT BY MR ANTTI VAARAS
DEPUTY-PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FINLAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE TWENTIETH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,

I would like to first congratulate you on your election as the Chairperson of the Twentieth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. Let me ensure you of Finland's full support in addressing the tasks before us.

Finland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by Mr Jacek Bylica on behalf of the European Union. I would however, like to highlight a few topics of particular importance to Finland.

Since the tragic events in 2013 in the Syrian Arab Republic, we have rightly concentrated at the core of our mission. Much of our time has been dedicated to dealing with the completion of destruction of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons stockpiles. Undoubtedly, the elimination of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons programme has been by far the biggest challenge that the OPCW has ever encountered. Our collective efforts have been substantial. Staying true to the Chemical Weapons Convention, our work is not finished until the chemical weapons programme is completely and irreversibly eliminated.

The use of toxic chemicals constitutes a breach of the Convention and the international community must condemn the use in strongest possible terms and bring to justice those responsible for these horrible acts. Finland strongly supports the decision of the Director-General that the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission continues its valuable work in the Syrian Arab Republic. The FFM plays substantial role in supporting investigations of the Joint Investigative Mechanism of the United Nations. I would like to inform you, that Finland has initiated preparations for a contribution to the new Trust Fund for Syria Mission.

It is also of the utmost importance that prompt destruction of the remaining production facilities is carried out and the discrepancies in the declarations are clarified. We commend the personnel of the FFM, DAT and the Technical Secretariat for their excellent work and want to emphasise the safety and security during their missions.

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While we see that the tasks related to the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons programme still form a substantial part of the OPCW's work, we should not lose sight of other fundamental tasks related to the Organisation.

We wish to emphasise a few points related to the future of the Organisation.

The Technical Secretariat's vision paper "The OPCW in 2025" and the Third Review Conference should be used as reference in guiding the Organisation in its future work. In this respect, Finland stresses the importance of continuous development of the Chemical Weapons Convention regime in the way that the Organisation is able to reflect the changing reality and quickly respond to new threats. These abilities require constant follow-up and alignment of the activities of the Organisation.

New developments in science and technology should be followed intensively and regularly. For example the convergence in chemistry and biology poses challenges already now and the challenges will most probably increase in the future. While Finland recognises the vital role of the Scientific Advisory Board within the Organisation and greatly appreciates its work, we think that even more ought to be done. We think that addressing developments in science and technology requires a more holistic approach. For instance, the information sharing between the Technical Secretariat, National Authorities, industries, academia and non-governmental organisations regarding Science and Technology development should be enhanced. In this connection, we welcome the Executive Council decision on the establishment of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach.

According to the definition of the "General Purpose Criterion" any toxic chemical or precursor chemical is to be considered a chemical weapon unless intended for purposes not prohibited by the Convention. Strengthening the status of the "general purpose criterion" and supporting the enhancement of the analysis capabilities of designated laboratories on chemicals that fall under it, would prepare us further to meet the future challenges and developments in Science and Technology. In this context, we also strongly support the further development and expansion of the OPCW Central Analytical Database, OCAD. The more comprehensive the OCAD is, the more likely it is that the chemicals relevant to the Convention will be identified. The OCAD is one of the key tools in ensuring the continued effectiveness of the verification regime. Development and expansion of OCAD with relevant chemicals ought to be of interest to all.

Finland wishes to stress the role of the designated laboratories especially in investigating the alleged use. The expertise of the designated laboratories was crucial in the United Nations Investigation mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. Therefore it is of the utmost importance to maintain and support the strong network of designated laboratories i.e. the system of proficiency testing for both environmental and biomedical samples. In this connection Finland welcomes the Executive Council decision to establish the Proficiency Testing mechanism for biomedical samples from 2016 onward.

The Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, VERIFIN, has offered training for experts and chemists from the developing countries since 1990. To date 1187 trainees from 134 countries have participated in various training courses. The courses are provided mainly on the analysis of the chemical warfare related chemicals from environmental samples but also on the activities of National Authorities in implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. These courses have proved to be useful. The Ministry of

Foreign Affairs of Finland and International Cooperation Branch of the OPCW are highly appreciated for funding the courses.

In the context of Central Nervous System-acting Chemicals Finland has commenced a process considering the issue with the aim of determining a national position. We thank Australia's initiative on the Joint Paper and we support it as a co-sponsor. Finland welcomes further discussions in order to increase transparency on this topic.

Lastly, I would like to thank all delegations for the possibility and the responsibility given to me to facilitate the OPCW's Programme and Budget for 2016. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to the States Parties and the Technical Secretariat for the quality of the work done and the very constructive way in which the budget consultations were held and the excellent outcome was reached.

To conclude, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this Conference, and be published on the OPCW website and extranet. Thank you for your attention.

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