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BELARUS

**STATEMENT BY MR NIKOLAI BORISEVICH
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BELARUS TO THE OPCW AT THE
TWENTIETH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Distinguished Chairperson,

The delegation of the Republic of Belarus congratulates you on your election to the post of Chairperson of the Twentieth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and assures you of its intent to work constructively.

The Belarusian delegation also thanks Ambassador Vesela Korać for her work as Chairperson of the Nineteenth Session of the Conference.

We are grateful to Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü for his informative and extensive report, and we give high marks to his work as OPCW Director-General.

The Belarusian delegation aligns itself with the statement by the Permanent Representative of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and China. I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to thank the delegation of Iran for its work as coordinator of the Non-Aligned Movement within the OPCW. I would also like to express our appreciation for all of the delegations with which we have worked constructively and productively over the course of the past year.

Gradually and with regular collaborative efforts, we are moving toward achieving total universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The accession of Myanmar and Angola in 2015 constitutes a significant step in this direction. We are confident that universal international agreements in the field of disarmament and security will serve as unconditional tool capable of putting into practice common rules for all States, without exception. This is why today, we urgently call for all States that have not yet acceded to the Convention to either sign or ratify this fundamental document as soon as possible.

We are pleased to note the considerable progress achieved in destroying all stockpiles of chemical weapons. We note the efforts of the Russian Federation to complete the destruction of chemical weapons at four Russian facilities by the end of this year, considerably ahead of schedule. We also welcome the efforts of other possessor States in this area, and we understand the objective challenges that they encounter; we rely on their dedication to the task at hand to definitively and irreversibly destroy this type of weapon. We believe that this most important task must be completed in the shortest possible time.



This year, we have marked several commemorative events with the OPCW in connection with the centenary of the first large-scale use of toxic chemicals in Ieper. The many graves of those who took part in the military actions in the area near Lake Naroch in Belarus where chemical weapons were used at the front serve as a sombre reminder of the events of World War I.

The Syrian dossier remains one of the key items on the OPCW's agenda.

We welcome the Syrian Arab Republic's actions to fulfil all of its obligations and the corresponding decisions of the Executive Council related to the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons and former production facilities.

We view the actions of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria as an important means of obtaining exclusively in-depth, balanced, and unbiased information. The most recent information about the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic gives rise to deep concern. In this regard, I would like to once again restate our fundamental position: we categorically condemn any use of chemical weapons.

The Belarusian delegation looks forward to the distribution of the Mission's final report. Our belief is that its findings will be built upon the same degree of justification and confirmation of the facts, applying common criteria, standards, and methodologies.

I would like to voice support for continuing the Fact-Finding Mission and thank its members for the work they have done, including in challenging conditions.

The Republic of Belarus supports the establishment of the Joint Investigative Mechanism of the OPCW and the United Nations to conduct an investigation in line with United Nations Security Council resolution 2235, dated 7 August 2015. We firmly believe that the unique practical experience and knowledge of the OPCW as the sole specialised organisation in the field of chemical weapons must be used to the full and as effectively as possible within this Mechanism.

We note the considerable amount of work done by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team to examine the initial declarations submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic. We hope that the intent of the Syrian Government to cooperate in a constructive manner with the Technical Secretariat will help bring the initial declaration into line with the requirements of the Convention in the shortest time possible.

The Republic of Belarus views the fulfilment of its obligations under the Convention at a national level with a great sense of responsibility. We are committed to the key goals and tasks of the OPCW, which are important for and clear to us. Considering our own experience, we are prepared to continue assisting other countries in building their national systems to implement the Convention. We will also strive to make a weighty contribution to the development of international cooperation in areas such as the peaceful use of chemicals, modern chemical technologies, the hazardous properties of chemicals, chemical protection against the consequences of chemical attacks, and industrial chemical catastrophes. For this purpose, the Republic of Belarus has in place serious scientific, technological, educational, and human resource capabilities.

We are pleased to note the opening in Belarus in 2015 of an advanced expertise centre within the Institute of Retraining and Professional Development under the Emergency Situations Ministry of

the Republic of Belarus. Thanks to productive cooperation with the Technical Secretariat, it has been possible to bring to life the agreements reached between the President of the Republic of Belarus and the Director-General of the OPCW in Minsk in spring last year. An information stand about the centre can be found in the foyer.

I would like to thank the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their traditionally constructive collaboration with our centre in organising two joint training courses this year.

It is clear that all States Parties are interested in ensuring that the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons remains strong and is capable of responding adequately to new challenges and threats. We welcome the creation of the working group to discuss the OPCW's priorities for the future.

It seems to us that strengthening education and outreach is increasingly relevant. In this regard, we welcome the establishment of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach. We also welcome the establishment of an OPCW Day, an initiative that was supported by the Belarusian delegation. We are prepared to work with the Technical Secretariat and other interested States Parties to the Convention to achieve the most effective way to commemorate this annual event.

Distinguished Director-General,

Thank you for your attention. I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this Twentieth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

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