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**AUSTRALIA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR BRETT MASON PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES UNDER AGENDA ITEM 25 ON ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Thank you Mr Chairman,

On behalf of the delegations of Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay, I have the honour once again to present a joint paper for this Conference, entitled “Aerosolisation of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes” (C-21/NAT.3/Rev.2).

I am pleased to add that the Czech Republic has subsequently subscribed to this joint paper. We welcome its support, and we will update and reissue the paper to reflect the Czech Republic as a co-signatory.

This paper seeks to highlight our concerns about the dangers of chemicals that act on the central nervous system, fentanyls in particular, in a law enforcement context. These are highly toxic substances-some equivalent to nerve agents like sarin-and when they are dispersed as an aerosol, it is almost impossible to control the dosage received by any one person.

Speaking now in a national capacity, Australia is convinced that these chemicals cannot be used safely, without posing an unacceptable risk of death or permanent injury. This is not a conclusion we have reached by ourselves, but rather from the conclusions of the vast majority of scientific experts.

In this vein, we wish to acknowledge the substantial work done by the OPCW’s Scientific Advisory Board, to consider central nervous system-acting chemicals, in April this year and in 2012.

The joint paper submitted does nothing more than to acknowledge the genuine concerns about these substances, and to make the modest suggestion of starting discussions on this matter within the OPCW.



To address some possible misconceptions, we are not seeking to amend the Chemical Weapons Convention. We are not seeking to impose any additional restrictions on pharmaceutical industries which produce such chemicals for legitimate medical uses. We are not seeking to impose additional restrictions on law enforcement agencies using appropriate riot control agents, as enshrined in the Convention.

The use of central nervous system-acting chemicals in law enforcement scenarios represents a real and pressing blind spot for the Chemical Weapons Convention. If we are to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons in the decades to come, we cannot fail to address this challenge before us.

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