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ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR DR ALIREZA JAHANGIRI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN TO THE
OPCW AT THE TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE
CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Please allow me to begin by congratulating you, Ambassador Israng of Germany on your well-deserved election as the Chairperson of this session of the Conference. I am confident that under your able leadership, the Conference will be steered to a successful conclusion. I also wish to express my appreciation to Ambassador Ibarrola-Nicolín of Mexico for his efforts as the Chairperson of the Twentieth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

I would like to extend my delegation's appreciation to the Director-General, Ambassador Üzümcü and his colleagues in the Technical Secretariat for their efforts and excellent arrangements in preparations for this Conference.

The Islamic Republic of Iran would like to congratulate the chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement and China to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. I would also like to associate my delegation with the statement delivered by Her Excellency Mrs Haifa Aissami Madah, Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the OPCW, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

The Chemical Weapons Convention was a long sought multilateral instrument negotiated as a joint effort to prevent chemistry from being used for warfare. It was the only collective achievement of the international community in the field of disarmament that provides for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. If the universality of this instrument could have been achieved and all Member States fully adhered to all provisions of this Convention, then we could expect the full realisation of the purposes and objectives of this Convention. The Convention consists of the four-main following pillars:

1. Full destruction of all chemical weapons stockpiles.
2. Robust and effective system for international cooperation to promote the peaceful uses and unimpeded trade of chemistry.



3. Assistance to the States Parties to protect themselves against the possible use of chemical weapons.
4. Verification system to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Convention.

The Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to the Convention and spares no effort to promote its universality and full implementation of all its provisions. The international community is aware that the active participation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in international negotiations for drafting the Convention was rooted in a very bitter experience in our recent history as the main victim of chemical weapons in the contemporary era.

It is noteworthy that the driving force that created the momentum for the conclusion of this Convention was inspired by the shocking memories of mankind of the use of different types of chemical weapons against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Indeed, these inhumane attacks left about 100,000 dead or chemically wounded casualties that never erase from the memory of the human being. To learn more about this horrifying experience, I would like to invite all distinguished delegates and participants to visit the exhibition organised by some Iranian victims of the chemical weapons outside the conference room.

Our commitment to this Convention and cooperation with the OPCW go beyond a merely legal undertaking. It emanates from our religious belief, which manifested in the Fatwa of our Supreme Leaders, against all weapons of mass destruction. Long lasting and ancient Iranian culture and values can neither accept any kind of weapons that would create unnecessary suffering, nor distinguished between civilian and military or create irrevocable damages to the environment. In this context, we condemn any use of chemical weapons, anywhere, by any one and under any circumstances and we are determined to fully support any effort against all weapons of mass destruction, in particular chemical weapons.

The disarmament aspect of this Convention is of utmost importance for the Islamic Republic of Iran. The completion of destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles constitutes the *raison d'être* of the Convention. We would like to express our deep concern over the fact that the possessor States have not met the final extended deadline (29 April 2012) set by the Convention for destruction of their chemical weapons stockpiles. We urge all possessor States Parties, to comply with their obligations and make every effort necessary to fulfil their commitments based on the adopted decisions made by the policy-making organs.

The realisation of the main purposes and objectives of the Convention is extremely dependent on full implementation of all its provisions and achieving universality. In this context, we urge all States Parties to double their efforts in an organised manner to establish a mechanism for promotion of universality of the Convention, in which it puts pressure on those outside of the Convention, in particular the Israeli regime, to accede to it without any further delay or preconditions.

One of the major pillars of the Convention is Article XI. The aim of this Article is to promote free peaceful trade of chemicals and chemical technology among States Parties. In fact, this Article which articulates all critical areas of cooperation regarding facilitating the fullest possible exchange of chemicals, equipment and technological information in the field of chemistry for peaceful purposes, will generate stronger support for the overall goals of the Convention. Promotion of international cooperation from another point of view is one of the

important issues in order to enhance the national implementation and strengthen the capacity building of States Parties. Unfortunately, almost 19 years after the entry-into-force of the Convention and in spite of related decisions, the commitment of the States Parties in this field has not been met. We call upon States Parties to remove discriminatory restrictions such as unilateral sanctions against other States Parties or any restrictions beyond the Convention provisions for States Parties, which affect the Convention's long term viability and have an adverse impact on the trust existing among the States Parties. My delegation appreciates the efforts made by the Secretariat in the field of Article XI and asks the Secretariat to pay due attention to overall, holistic and promotional aspects of the implementation of Article XI and not focus its work only on safety and security of chemical industries. The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes convening the first review and evaluation workshop of the components of agreed framework for full and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI on 22 November 2016. In this regard, we support the proposal made by the Non-Aligned Movement and China to hold such workshops annually.

The use of chemical weapons by terrorist groups is an emerging issue that threatens international peace and security. This issue is an international and multi-dimensional phenomenon and overcoming this challenge requires measures at all levels. We would like to emphasise that terrorist attackers and those who assist them to acquire capabilities to attack innocent civilians, must be held accountable and all States Parties should refrain from providing financial and military support to terrorist groups and make every effort to ensure that they cannot access chemical weapons.

We express our serious concerns regarding the reports on the use of chemical weapons by terrorist groups, in particular Da'esh, in Syria and Iraq, and request the Secretariat to consider and investigate the issue in coordination with the concerned States Parties and inform the policy-making organs accordingly.

Whilst commending the efforts made by two Co-Chairpersons of the Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW, my delegation is of the view that destruction of all categories of chemical weapons should remain on the top priorities of the Organisation in a non-discriminatory approach. We reiterate that the working group should address the future priorities to States Parties in a comprehensive and driven manner.

In the context of Article X, my delegation believes that well-organised efforts with adequate resources for implementation of the provisions of Article X and achievement of a consistent status of readiness by the Organisation for responding to requests for assistance, particularly in order to reduce the suffering of the victims of chemical weapons, are crucial for the realisation of the objectives of the Convention. In this vein, we encourage all States Parties to contribute to the Trust Fund for the International Support Network of Victims of Chemical Weapons to show their solidarity with the victims and enhance the humanitarian goals of the network.

Full implementation of this Article can only be reached through maintaining the highest possible standards of coordination and readiness for delivery of assistance by the Organisation and the States Parties. The Secretariat should make appropriate preparations to respond quickly to any request made by the concerned member for the use of chemical weapons in its territory.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is of the view that in the establishment of the Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM), treatment of the victims of chemical weapons should be the main mandate of the RRAM and it should be under the provisions of Article X on the field of assistance and protection activities. As we have an established mechanism for verification activities under other provisions of the Convention, it is absolutely harmful, if we imagine verification tasks in the framework of Article X. Thus, involving RRAM with verification would go beyond the legal requirements of the Convention, and would not be conducive to this goal and practically create severe obstacles for its implementation.

Syria's accession to the Convention indicates its national will to abide by all international norms and rules. Confronting the special and critical conditions for a long period of time, the Syrian Arab Republic has explicitly shown its positive approach by completing the destruction of its chemical weapons and related facilities. This constructive cooperation needs appreciation and more support rather than forcible measures. Despite the technical nature of the verification process, some States Parties tried to put pressure on Syria in any circumstances and on different pretexts. For a while, the matter of political pressure was the issue of meeting the deadline for destruction, then it was shifted to the allegation regarding the use of chlorine without any reliable documents and now, they keep continuing this political pressure on some issues which are completely technical. They can be easily rectified since the political will of the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the OPCW exists and this country has announced, many times and in many ways, its readiness to provide all information regarding its chemical activities and grant any kind of visits necessary by the OPCW. This constructive engagement for cooperation with the OPCW was continuously repeated by the Syrian Arab Republic officials including the most recent one stipulated in the statement delivered yesterday by H.E. Dr Mekdad, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic.

I would like to remind you that when some possessors States Parties did not meet the deadline for their destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles, the Organisation did not politicise their failure and showed the flexibility to extend the time for the destruction, which is the main pillar of the Convention.

Therefore, while acclaiming the significant progress achieved in the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons, my delegation would like to encourage all States Parties to provide technical assistance to the Syrian Arab Republic to improve its national capacity building in order to address its remaining commitments.

In this vein, findings of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) should rely on verifiable and independent sources and refrain from ambiguity and vagueness. I would like to reiterate that the recent report is tentative. The JIM should adhere to impartial and professional investigation on the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, based on sound requirements including through on-site inspections, using valid and reliable evidences, in particular paying due consideration to the information provided by the Syrian Arab Republic in its conclusions and reports rather than affecting by the politicised propaganda.

It is disturbing that due to the generous support of some countries which sponsor terrorism, the Syrian Arab Republic lost its full control over parts of the territory. These countries provide training to the terrorist groups, facilitating their access to complicated weapons and necessary materials for making chemical weapons and while they are using chemical

weapons against innocent people of Syria, they put blame on the Syrian Government simultaneously. It is regrettable that those States, which have a loud voice in criticising the Syrian Government over the technical failures in providing initial declarations, close their eyes and keep silent over recorded actual use and horrifying threatening messages on the use of chemical weapons by Da'esh, Al-Nosrah Front and other terrorist groups.

Last but not the least, I would like to tackle the important issue of the National Implementation for which my country has exemplary experience. This was highlighted in the Fourteenth National Authority Meeting of the Chemical Weapons Convention of Asian States Parties in May 2016 in Tehran. At that meeting, the participants from different Asian countries requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to share its experiences with them. My country is ready to work with other Member States in coordination with the OPCW. This can include a broad range of mechanisms of cooperation like mentorship programme and training courses.

Before finishing my statement, let me touch upon a procedural issue which severely affects the substance of the discussions in the OPCW. The rule of consensus is a well-established tradition over many years in the context of international security and disarmament for safeguarding any outcome based on the consent of Member States which facilitate its implementation. For many years, decision-making based on consensus in the OPCW was a cherished and deeply rooted tradition. Unfortunately, we recently observe a dangerous procedural shift towards resorting to the voting methods based on politically motivated motions rather than trying to make consensus among Member States. More alarming is the bad precedent of closing sessions without any outcome or making vicious linkages through taking hostage of all activities of the Organisation by one politicised issue.

In closing, Mr Chairperson, may I request that this statement be circulated as an official statement of the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the States Parties and be posted on both the external server and the public website. Thank you.

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