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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Director General, Excellencies, CWC Coalition Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for Pugwash to be able to address this important conference which is entrusted with addressing important current issues of the implementation of what is probably the best disarmament regime in the world so far – the Chemical Weapons Convention. Given the time factor and the need to avoid being over-ambitious, I would limit the statement to several specific points of varying importance.

1. The CWC – and the OPCW - will celebrate their 20th anniversaries in less than 6 months, and one has plenty of reasons to feel satisfied with the progress achieved so far on most issues, thus making the over-all assessment very positive. This proves that the original design of the regime was basically correct and that the implementation work by both the States Parties and the Secretariat was fairly successful.

This should not obscure, however, some problems, which are hardly a secret. One is the delay with the completion of the CW elimination in the major possessor States. Everyone knows that this delay has been caused by the fact the CW destruction turned out to be more complicated and resource-demanding than initially anticipated, and this was recognized four years ago in 2012. But it is still an anomaly, which needs to be corrected before long, before it turns into a politically toxic factor.

Another anomaly is the problem with delayed contributions to the budget. It is true that in today's world many countries are experiencing financial deficits or other difficulties, and have to prioritize expenditures. But there is a growing risk of this issue turning into a trend to save too much on international disarmament regimes – even at the expense of their multilateral nature, and this is something, which over time can undermine the very foundations of these regimes and push them towards some form of “privatization.” To avoid this from happening both the States Parties and the Secretariat need to devote some time and effort to designing an intelligent and imaginative strategy to address delayed payment issues.

2. In 2014 the OPCW was thrown into an operation, which was not really envisaged during the two decades of negotiations on the CWC – chemical disarmament in a State Party in a state of war. I mean Syria. Many innovative approaches were needed and they were developed and proved effective, especially as far as declaration of stockpiles, their removal and eventual destruction away from the country, including at sea, were concerned. The complications with declaration of production facilities should not be ignored of course, but we should not forget either that other parties, in the process of declaration of CWPFs used to make declarations which were then withdrawn and replaced with modified ones. One state party even declared

possession of a CW arsenal, then withdrew this declaration and then confessed anew. Things happen, and they should not be blown out of proportion. Yet, this is not the reason for the State Party in question to delay or avoid responses to specific questions, put to it by the Secretariat, and we hope it would make an extra effort to clarify the remaining issues with the Secretariat in a satisfactory and expeditious way. We also hope that countries in a position and willing to do so could provide the necessary assistance for achieving such results.

But the separate issue of alleged use, and in particular attributing responsibility, proved to be much more complicated. Without going into detail, and fully conscious that quite a few people may disagree, I would suggest that the main problem was not even the safety and security of inspectors, but the fact that for many players the question of accountability was subordinate to their key and uncompromising objectives in the Syrian war. Equally unhelpful is the over-use of the slogan of accountability, especially against the background of repeated under-use of this requirement in other conflict and war situations. For this and other reasons it was a good decision to extend the mandate of the JIM.

In any case, the lessons of the OPCW operations in Syria will at some point require serious analysis, and not just from the operational point of view, but also with the view to explore the need for improving the CWC mechanism. That applies in particular to possible use of various categories of non-scheduled chemicals as weapons.

In conclusion in respect to Syria. There is no need to prove that any use of chemicals as weapons is abhorrent, and that there have been such cases not just in Syria, but in neighboring Iraq as well. Yet, it is not correct to proclaim the norm against chemical weapons eroded or destroyed. Or, at least premature. The norm must be protected, and not declared dead.

3. The lessons from Syria are not the only issues that will require analysis in the run-up to and in the course of the next CWC Review Conference in 2018. Practical implications of convergence between chemistry and biology should be among them. Several years ago Pugwash has called for increased interaction between the OPCW and the BWC regime. Therefore it was heartening to see that during the recently concluded BWC Review Conference this idea received growing support in the political debate. Unfortunately, of course, the results of that Review Conference were significantly below expectations.

4. Finally, a small administrative issue regarding NGO participation in the CSPs. It is excellent that such opportunity is being given to NGOs. It is less excellent, but understandable that States Parties wish to keep an eye on the process of registration. But some of the procedures are overly complicated. It is difficult to understand, what purpose is achieved when the members of the delegation of one and the same NGO are required to apply separately and individually. To our knowledge, this is not how other multilateral and UN-type organizations do their business: for them presentation of one *Note Verbale* per NGO is enough; there is no need for multiple explanations of the organization's intentions and mandates, and there is only one centrally prepared and approved list of delegates from that NGO.

Thank you very much, and let me wish all of you very successful work. I wish for this statement to be made part of the final CSP record and posted on the external server and website.