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**FINLAND**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR KATRI VIINIKKA  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FINLAND TO THE OPCW AT THE  
TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General, Excellencies, dear colleagues,

I would like to congratulate you, Ambassador Israng of Germany, on your election as the Chairperson of the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the States Parties. Let me assure you of Finland's full support in addressing the tasks before us.

I would like to thank the Director-General for his statement and leadership, and the Technical Secretariat for their valuable work.

Finland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by Mr Jacek Bylica, Principal Advisor and Special Envoy for Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, on behalf of the European Union. However, I would like to highlight a few topics of particular importance to Finland.

Since the first reports of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic in 2013, we have rightly concentrated on the core of our mission. Much of our time has been dedicated to dealing with the completion of destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles. Finland contributed to this joint operation by providing financial, military and civilian assistance.

We remain, however, concerned over the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain in Syria's declaration. It is of utmost importance that the prompt destruction of the remaining production facilities is carried out and that the outstanding issues in the Syrian declaration are clarified. Staying true to the Chemical Weapons Convention, our work is not finished until the chemical weapons program is completely and irreversibly eliminated.

We welcome the reports of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). The third and fourth reports raise grave concern. In this regard Finland welcomes the recent decision taken at the Eighty-Third Session of the Executive Council, which condemned the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We need to remain clear that the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anytime, and anywhere and under any circumstances is clearly contrary to international law. Those responsible for such acts must be held accountable.



Finland also welcomes the adoption by consensus of United Nations Security Council resolution 2319 (2016) renewing JIM's mandate for one more year. Achieving unity in the Security Council on the need to extend JIM's mandate was an important step. In light of many new allegations of use of chemical weapons in Syria, it is clear that plenty of work still remains - both for the OPCW and for the JIM.

Further investigations are needed as long as use of chemicals by parties to the conflict continues. But it is equally important to ensure a robust response to the mechanism's findings. Assigning blame is important but after that there must also be consequences for those who have been found responsible for these crimes.

Finland fully supports the valuable work of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

The safe removal of Libya's remaining chemical weapons precursors, in compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and the United Nations Security Council resolution 2298 (2016), constitutes a positive and important development for the stability of Libya and the region more widely.

Finland participated actively in this operation by contributing EUR 500,000 to the OPCW Trust Fund for Support to Libya and by posting officers for advisory and expert positions in the maritime transport operation, which was led by Denmark.

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

In guiding the organisation of the OPCW's future work Finland stresses the importance of continuous development of the Chemical Weapons Convention's 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. We welcome the initiation of work by the Open-ended Working Group on Future Priorities, co-chaired by the Ambassadors of Canada and South-Africa.

It is essential to maintain a strong verification regime also in the future. Supporting the network of designated laboratories and strengthening the status of the "General Purpose Criterion" are important components of an effective verification regime and would prepare us further to meet the future challenges and developments in Science and Technology. In this context, we also strongly support the vital role of the Scientific Advisory Board within the Organisation and greatly appreciate its work.

The Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, VERIFIN, has offered training for experts and chemists from countries of the global South since 1990. To date 1355 trainees from 135 countries have participated in various training courses. The female scientists are preferred whenever possible following the principles of Finnish Development Policy. The courses are provided mainly on the analysis of the chemical warfare related chemicals, but also on the activities of National Authorities in implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We highly appreciate the OPCW (International Cooperation Branch), the European Union and the United States of America (Department of State) for supporting these courses financially.

In the context of Central Nervous System-acting Chemicals Finland is a co-sponsor of the Joint Paper initiated by Australia and Switzerland. Finland considers it to be important to continue the discussion on aerosolised CNS-acting chemicals in law enforcement, and we encourage further steps in the framework of the OPCW.

Finland has been actively contributing to various OPCW's missions. We will remain committed and ready to contemplate offering our contribution and expertise for future endeavours as well.

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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