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Statement

by

Amb Jonghyun CHOE

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea

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Mr. Chairman,
Director-General,
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by joining previous delegations in congratulating you, Ambassador Christoph Israng, on your election as the Chair of this session. My special thanks go to the outgoing Chair, Ambassador Eduardo Ibarrola-Nicolin, for his dedication and valuable achievements. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü not only for his comprehensive report today but also his outstanding leadership in steering the OPCW.

Mr. Chairman,

For the last several years, there have been notable achievements in the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons and their production facilities. However, the OPCW and the international community are still faced with daunting challenges such as the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic and the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the declaration of the Syrian Government to the OPCW. According to the third and fourth reports of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism, the Syrian Armed Forces had been

involved in the use of toxic chemicals as weapons in three cases - 21 April 2014; 16 March 2015 and again on 16 March 2015.

My delegation is gravely concerned over the use of chemical weapons in the territory of this State Party. To prevent any repetition of such atrocities in the future, it is imperative that the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of the use of chemical weapons be held accountable.

In this regard, my delegation welcomes the decision entitled “OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic”, submitted by Spain and adopted at the 83rd Session of the Executive Council. My delegation also welcomes the UN Security Council Resolution 2319 which renews the mandate of the JIM for a further period of one year. My delegation strongly urges the Syrian Arab Republic, as a responsible State Party to the CWC, to fully cooperate with the OPCW and the UN to resolve all the outstanding issues as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman,

There has also been growing concern over the possibility of chemical terrorism by non-state actors, which in fact has actually occurred – carried out by ISIL, as seen in the third and fourth JIM reports. My delegation on this occasion wishes to strongly emphasize that the prevention of the acquisition and use of chemical weapons by non-state actors should be a top priority for the OPCW. In this regard, my delegation notes with appreciation the ongoing valuable work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors.

Mr. Chairman,

To achieve the main goals of the OPCW, these goals, inter alia, a world free of chemical weapons, the total destruction of the existing chemical weapons and the universality of the CWC, should be pursued simultaneously. Nearly 93% of declared stockpiles of chemical weapons have been destroyed thanks to the laudable and constant efforts by the OPCW. The CWC, now with 192 Member States, is one of the most universal disarmament treaties. My delegation calls on the Secretariat to redouble its efforts for the total destruction of the existing chemical weapons and for the universality of the CWC. We also call on the countries still remaining outside the Convention, including North Korea, to join the Convention as soon as possible without any preconditions.

Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Korea has contributed to strengthening international cooperation in the fields of chemical safety and security. One notable instance has been the hosting of the Seoul Workshop on the Peaceful Development and Use of Chemistry for Member States of the OPCW in the Asian Region since 2012. This year, the Workshop was held in Seoul early this month. Twenty-five participants from fourteen Asian States Parties attended the Workshop which covered a wide range of issues. Amongst them were the Korean chemical industry's safety management and chemical safety risk assessment for accident prevention. We look forward to sharing our experience for the enhancement of national capacities in chemical safety and security in the years ahead.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation welcomes the decision on the Draft Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2017. This was the result of the collective efforts by the Secretariat and States Parties. It is imperative that the OPCW remain financially stable and sustainable in order to continue conducting its core activities and functioning in an effective manner. In this regard, we commend the Secretariat's efforts to streamline its budget, for example, by reducing its fixed-term staff positions for the non-operational programmes without compromising its capability to faithfully implement its main objectives. My delegation is also of the view that States Parties that are in arrears in the payment of their assessed contributions need to pay those arrears as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman,

The OPCW will host a Commemoration Ceremony to mark the Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare on 30 November in the OPCW Ieper Room. Let us never forget the suffering of the victims of such heinous acts. The atrocity of such events should be a constant spur to us never to become complacent.

On a final note, my delegation welcomes the establishment and activities of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW. Its fruitful activities will indeed be of great help to us in making the optimum use of the resources available to the OPCW.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.