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NEW ZEALAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JANET LOWE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW AT THE
TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Thank you Mr Chairperson.

New Zealand joins others in congratulating you on your appointment as Chairperson of the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and assures you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express New Zealand's appreciation to Ambassador Eduardo Ibarrola-Nicolín of Mexico, for ably steering the Conference during the past year.

Our thanks also go to the Director-General for his guidance and leadership, and to his team for their excellent work in challenging circumstances.

New Zealand is fully committed to the objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The OPCW is a model of international cooperation, and there have been many successes since its creation. Regrettably, however, the world is not yet free from the scourge of chemical weapons.

New Zealand is particularly concerned at the developments in Syria and fully supports the work of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

The JIM reports show clearly that the Syrian Government, a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, has violated the Convention and relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. We condemn these actions which show a blatant disregard both for Syria's obligations and for the lives of its citizens.

The JIM's third report also concluded that the so-called "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL) used chemical weapons in Syria, in contravention of international law. Likewise, New Zealand condemns these actions, as we do not condone the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances.

As New Zealand has said repeatedly, the international response must match the seriousness of these findings, and those responsible must be held to account.

New Zealand greatly appreciates the ongoing work of the Technical Secretariat in response to the situation in Syria, notably the work of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and Declaration



Assessment Team (DAT). In our view, the DAT reports are reliable, comprehensive and robust, and the Director-General and his team are to be commended for their dedication and professionalism.

As we have said before, New Zealand is gravely concerned regarding the DAT's findings, in particular the fact that the Technical Secretariat has not been able to resolve the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in Syria's declaration. Moreover, the number of outstanding issues has increased rather than decreased over time, and we urge Syria to take immediate action to remedy this situation.

New Zealand has been pleased to support the OPCW's work over the past year through voluntary contributions – to the Trust Fund for Syria Missions, the Trust Fund for Libya, and the Scientific Advisory Board.

We commend the success of the international operation to remove and destroy Libya's remaining chemicals, and we are pleased to be able to contribute financially to this work.

The Scientific Advisory Board plays a crucial role in ensuring that the OPCW and its policy-making organs take due account of developments in science and technology. New Zealand is pleased to support the Board's work and we hope that others will also be in a position to do so.

New Zealand welcomes the work led by Australia and Switzerland on the weaponisation of central nervous system-acting chemicals in law enforcement, and co-sponsored the joint paper submitted to this Conference. We share the concerns expressed by numerous States Parties regarding the serious health and safety risks posed by such chemicals, and the possibility of their deliberate misuse. The New Zealand Government is examining the issues carefully with a view to formulating a national position.

The OPCW stands at a crossroads as it nears the completion of its destruction activities. New Zealand looks forward to engaging in dialogue with all States Parties in the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities, and thanks the Co-Chairpersons for their work so far. For our part, New Zealand envisages an organisation which: retains its core capabilities; is able to respond quickly and effectively to new substances and threats; supports national implementation; promotes regional cooperation; and leverages the knowledge, skills and capabilities of relevant stakeholders.

Finally Mr Chairperson,

In May this year New Zealand completed its two-year term on the Executive Council. It was a privilege to be able to contribute to the decision-making apparatus of the OPCW. While we are no longer on the Council, New Zealand will continue to work constructively with other States Parties, the Secretary-General and the Technical Secretariat in pursuit of the Convention's goal of a safer and chemical weapons free world.

I ask that this statement be treated as an official document of this Conference.

Thank you for your attention.