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**PORTUGAL**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ROSA BATORÉU  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PORTUGAL TO THE OPCW AT THE  
TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Thank you very much Mr Chairperson,

Let me start by congratulating you, Ambassador Christoph Israng, of Germany, for your election as Chair of the Conference of the States Parties and by commending your predecessor, Ambassador Eduardo Ibarrola-Nicolín, of Mexico, for his stewardship.

Mr Chairperson, we are confident that with your abilities you will also lead us successfully in the coming year. Let me assure you that you can count on our support and cooperation.

I would like also to express our appreciation for the very efficient way in which Ambassador Odette Melono, of Cameroon, has been carrying out her duties as Chair of the Executive Council.

Last, but certainly not least, let me commend the Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, and the Technical Secretariat staff for the excellent work they have been doing in the many fronts of the OPCW mandate, including the remarkable success achieved in Libya and the continued efforts regarding Syria.

In concluding my introductory words, I would like to state that Portugal fully aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the distinguished Ambassador of Slovakia on behalf of the European Union.

Allow me to express my satisfaction at the opportunity of addressing this Conference just a few days after I presented my credentials to the Director-General as the new Permanent Representative of Portugal to the Organisation.

These are indeed challenging times for the OPCW. The use of chemical weapons in Syria on a number of occasions, including by Syria itself, a State Party of the Convention, as pointed out in the third and fourth reports of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), threatens the most fundamental values of the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.



Portugal welcomes the extension of the JIM's mandate by the Security Council and reiterates its support to the Fact-Finding Mission aimed at establishing the facts behind the allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria beyond all doubt.

We must stand up and defend the values and the integrity of the Convention and the credibility of the OPCW. This is why Portugal fully supports the decision adopted by the Executive Council at its Eighty-Third Session.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons in Syria, or anywhere else, by anyone, and reaffirm our conviction that those responsible for such acts should be held accountable.

We also consider it imperative that Syria complies fully with its obligations and tackles all outstanding issues regarding its initial declaration and related disclosures.

2016 has not been all bad news. The remarkable success of the operation in Libya illustrates the potential of the OPCW as an instrument of international security and stability. We commend the efforts of the Technical Secretariat, the Libyan Government and the several States Parties that, in one way or other, were directly involved in the removal and the destruction of Libya's remaining Category 2 chemical weapons.

This leads me back to the challenges that lie ahead of the OPCW.

As the focus of the OPCW gradually shifts from the destruction of chemical weapons to the prevention of re-emergence, the Organisation must adapt, while remaining focused on the core objectives of the Convention.

It is paramount that the OPCW, while seeking to preserve a sense of ownership among all States Parties, avoids dispersing its limited resources in activities of less return for its fundamental mission as the security organisation charged with the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The important work conducted by both the Advisory Body on Education and Outreach and the Scientific Advisory Body should be aligned with its objectives.

We expect the OPCW to remain a relevant actor in the international security architecture and the leading one in the field of chemical weapons. We encourage the OPCW to enhance its cooperation with other specialised bodies and to explore the best ways to maximise its added value and avoid overlaps.

The challenge posed by the terrorist threat, in particular by non-State actors, demands a coherent approach, where the various bodies concerned should strive to explore complementarities and synergies, and to avoid duplicating efforts.

In this context, Portugal values the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and its Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors and calls for the swift adoption by the Executive Council of the draft decision on "Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors".

Let me also take this opportunity to commend the Technical Secretariat for the establishment of the Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM).

In our reflection on the future of the Organisation, priority should be given to the optimisation of the inspection and verification regime, an area where the operation in Syria should provide valuable teachings on more agile and results-oriented methods and techniques. At the same time, it is crucial to preserve the OPCW's high standards of expertise and operational capability, by ensuring that the Organisation will not lack the proper technical, financial and human resources. The funding of the OPCW must remain a joint, equitable and timely effort on the part of all States Parties.

In light of the future areas of activity, we are glad to note the growing number of States Parties that have subscribed to the joint paper on the central nervous system acting chemicals. We look forward to the continuation of the discussion on the best ways to tackle this issue.

Portugal also welcomes the establishment of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW and is confident about its contribution to the success of the Fourth Review Conference.

In closing, Mr Chairperson,

I would like to reaffirm Portugal's commitment to consider new joint initiatives with the Technical Secretariat aimed at promoting OPCW issues, namely in cooperation with the Portuguese-speaking States Parties. In this regard, we are pleased to confirm the participation of an expert from our National Authority in the Workshop for Legal Drafters that will take place in Luanda, in December, organised by the Technical Secretariat and the Government of Angola.

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the States Parties and be posted on the website of the OPCW and its extranet.

Thank you very much Mr Chairperson.

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