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FRANCE

**STATEMENT BY MR SÉBASTIEN BRAHA
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE TO THE OPCW AT THE
TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES
(UNDER AGENDA ITEM 9)**

Mr Chairperson,

My delegation had not planned to take the floor under this agenda item. But after listening to the various remarks that have just been made, I feel it necessary to respond to certain points that have been raised.

We heard from one of the delegations that took the floor about how the is a stubborn thing. That is correct. The truth is resolution 2235 (2015), adopted unanimously by the United Nations Security Council. The truth is an independent international mechanism, not one particular State or another presenting what it considers as evidence and asserting that it holds the truth; an independent mechanism that has presented us with its findings.

And what are those findings? Three attacks, in which the regular Syrian army was found to have used chemical weapons. Another attack in which it was Da'esh, a terrorist group, that was found to have used chemical weapons. We are not here to accept certain findings and not others. We accept each one of these findings.

The truth is that after the presentation of four reports, the mandate of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism was renewed, again unanimously, through Security Council resolution 2319 (2016).

The truth is also that the Conference of the States Parties, one of my colleagues put it very well, is not here to do the bidding of one delegation or another. The truth is that the Executive Council has adopted a decision. As unpleasant as it may be for us, given the consensus that is the rule and that we hold dear, the truth is that this decision was not adopted by just one vote, but indeed by a two-thirds majority. The truth too is that the Conference is the appropriate forum for the Organisation to respond to a violation of the Convention. If we are not here to speak out when the Convention has been violated, how can we hope to implement this or that part of the Convention?

One of the other delegations that took the floor recalled a position that we all share: we condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone. However, when that “anyone” is identified and becomes “someone”, we are no longer capable of living up to our responsibilities in a united manner, on the pretext that some do not like these independent findings. And yet our



mission is that. And so should we accept the fact that a minority is attempting to hold up our Organisation's work and, moreover, that it accuses the majority of politicising this matter? As one of our colleagues put it very well, this is about the credibility of our Organisation. There is credibility in unity, it is true. But credibility, above all, means taking one's responsibilities.

With regard to the cooperation and work between the Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic, we have been told about the pressures on Syria which purportedly have prevented it from getting the work done on its declaration, and in terms of destruction and verification. The Syrian initial declaration was made three years ago, and for three years the Technical Secretariat has been working to verify it, under very difficult circumstances. And have no doubt about it: it is technical work. Three years ago, Syria declared four chemical warfare agents; and then five; and then six; and now the Technical Secretariat informs us that it has found traces of 10 such agents. Likewise, the Syrian authorities declared seven production and storage sites; and then 11; and then 20; and then 27. And each time, the Syrian Government gives in, with regret it would seem, when confronted with the technical arguments presented by the Technical Secretariat. Where is the politicisation?

Finally, I agree with one of our colleagues who took the floor previously and who said that the ultimate goal of the OPCW is to work to rid the world of chemical weapons. That is exactly what we are doing here, by speaking out. And again, France sees no difference between the use of chemical weapons by terrorists, which we must fight, and by a State Party, which, at the very least, is to be condemned.

I thank you, and request that this statement be considered as an official document of this Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the States Parties, and that it be published on the OPCW website and extranet.

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