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**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MS IFFAT IMRAN GARDEZI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN TO
THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF
THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,

Allow me, at the outset, to convey my warm felicitations on your election as Chairperson of the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the States Parties. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in ensuring the success of the Conference.

We also thank the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Eduardo Ibarrola-Nicolín of Mexico for his able leadership of the Twentieth Session of the Conference.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China.

Our Organisation is experiencing a critical phase. The confirmed reports of the use of chemical weapons are a matter of serious concern. This has also impacted our traditional ways of deliberation and decision making.

Pakistan categorically condemns any use of chemical weapons by anyone. The fog of conflict can sometimes obscure the vision. We would do well to heed the reminder to us this morning by the Director-General about the worth and value of our institution and the treaty upon which it is based. We thank the Director-General for his detailed and inspiring statement, which is a testament to the quality of leadership that he provides to the Organisation.

We can lament the indifference to what the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon aptly described as a world that is over-armed and where peace is underfunded. However, here through the work of the OPCW is one endeavour that is clearly edifying and implementing a verifiable prohibition on an abhorrent weapon and a means of war.

It is incumbent upon us to do our very best to protect this regime and to strengthen it further so as to equip the Organisation to deal with the multiplicity of challenges that we face. For this, we must continue to work in the manner that has always been the hallmark of the OPCW – consensus decision making. This has been demonstrated in the face of many difficult issues in the past and we must continue to do so in the future.



To take more recent examples, the outstanding work of the Organisation in Syria and the removal of chemicals of concern from Libya proceeded on the basis of unanimity amongst States Parties. In the case of Syria, parties to the Geneva Agreement, which preceded actions at the OPCW and the United Nations Security Council, should endeavour to offer constructive solutions to outstanding issues.

The undeniable security benefits of the Convention, both global and regional, stem from verification of destruction of declared stockpiles as well as the relevant sectors of the chemical industry. We encourage the possessor States to ensure that the destruction of the remaining stockpiles continues uninterrupted. This applies also to the destruction of abandoned chemical weapons.

Since the Convention is not merely a declaratory treaty, the assurance that its norms are being respected everywhere can only come from submitting to the obligations that it establishes. Without universal adherence, our goal of a chemical weapons free world will remain uncertain even though there may be only just a few countries that remain non-members.

An important agenda item of this Conference relates to the promotion of universality of the Convention. Pakistan will support a strong message in support of universality.

National implementation of the Convention has remained a challenge for many countries due to the complex nature of its obligations. An objective and cooperative approach that we have consistently supported over the years is paying dividends, as is evident from the significant improvement of Article VII implementation around the world.

On our part, we have invested significant resources in establishing effective lines of communication and working procedures between our National Authority and other concerned sections of our Government.

We organise regular programmes for domestic outreach and information sharing as well as conduct practice exercises in the context of inspections.

In order to advance the goals of the Convention, Pakistan continually supports activities that make a practical contribution to the work of the Organisation. This includes hosting cooperative programmes, including advanced international assistance and protection courses. The Sixth International Advanced Course on Assistance and Protection was held in Islamabad from 14 to 18 November 2016 and was attended by 24 participants from 16 different countries. Pakistan has also established Regional Chemical Weapons Convention Assistance and Protection Centre in 2015 and has also pledged equipment to the OPCW under the National Protection programme thus, showing its complete support to the OPCW initiatives.

Organising these activities also underline the priority that we attach to the Convention's provisions relating to International Cooperation and Assistance as well as the peaceful use of chemistry. As we embark on the important exercise of determining the future priorities of our Organisation, we believe that international cooperation will occupy a salient position.

As Facilitator of Article XI, Pakistan welcomes the Review Workshop on Article XI, which was held on 22 November 2016. It provided States Parties with a useful opportunity to share information and ideas and to identify further areas to advance the implementation of this

Article. It is our hope that the positive elements from these discussions will enable continuation of a constructive and forward looking approach. Therefore, we hope that further and detailed discussion on the ideas which emerged from the Review Workshop would lead to solid and implementable consensus recommendations, which could become part of the document on the future priorities. At the same time the issues like regional needs, including capacity building, should also be given due consideration to increase ownership of the States Parties of the activities undertaken in the area of international cooperation under Article XI.

The decision adopted by the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties on the components for an agreed framework on the full implementation of Article XI continues to offer many opportunities to build on the consensus that it signifies.

The Chemical Weapons Convention today operates in an environment which is qualitatively different from when it came into force two decades ago.

The deliberations in the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Terrorism and its Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors underline the recognition that terrorism involving chemical weapons or toxic chemicals will continue to occupy our attention. We will continue to support the Secretariat's efforts and programmes that are meant for information sharing, coordination and capacity-building in States Parties against this menace.

At the same time the Convention will be challenged on account of the fast paced developments in the chemical industry as well as science and technology. The Technical Secretariat and States Parties need to ponder on how to handle these challenges. The developing and under developed countries are not equipped to cater for these developments. We, therefore need to assist and facilitate these countries through transfer of technology, knowledge sharing and resource development to enable them to take on future challenges in this field.

Discussions about science and technology need also to take into account developments in advanced military technologies and how often these lead to a search for exploiting real or perceived loopholes in legal instruments. So far, the important question of incapacitating agents has not received adequate attention. It is our hope that in the future, especially in the run up to the Fourth Review Conference, this issue will be treated with the seriousness that it merits.

The commencement of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW signifies the importance we all attach to the long-term effectiveness of the Organisation. The working group has conducted two sessions recently. In the last session held on 14 November 2016, my delegation stated that the Convention needed to be expanded to cover certain areas that were more recent in nature. At the same time, we also needed to ensure that the Convention was used innovatively to fulfil the future tasks. We also said that the work of the Open-Ended Working Group must avoid duplication. Keeping in view the threat of chemical weapons falling into the hands of non-State actors, we have to come up with ways and means for a stronger regime of verifications and avoidance of possibilities of any use of chemical weapons in future by anyone. We hope that continued discussions in the working group would enable us to firm up future priorities in an open and transparent manner. We note that in this context, there are also a number of important resource documents that the Director-General has already submitted for the consideration of States Parties.

The Fourth Review Conference will provide a critical opportunity to utilise the outcome of these deliberations and to provide a clear road map for the future. The essence of all previous Review Conferences and related activities is to ensure that the permanent prohibition on Chemical Weapons represented by the Convention continues to endure and to attract strong international support.

We approach this Conference not only with full awareness of the importance of the Chemical Weapons Convention for international security but also the challenges that we have ahead of us. We will spare no effort to work closely and constructively to ensure that the decisions this Conference adopts are in keeping with our strong commitment to the goals of the Convention, as well as to its permanence as an exemplary disarmament treaty.

To conclude, I would again like to congratulate you as the Chairperson and wish you and all delegates a successful conclusion of the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the States Parties. I would also like to thank the Director-General, his staff and the Technical Secretariat for making excellent arrangements for this Conference.

I would request that my statement be circulated as an official document of the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

Thank you all.

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