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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**STATEMENT BY MR KALAMANOV
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND DEPUTY
MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND TRADE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT THE
TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,

To begin with, let me congratulate you on behalf of the delegation of the Russian Federation on your election to such an important and responsible post. We are confident that under your leadership, the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention will be constructive and take measures to strengthen the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (hereinafter “OPCW”).

The Russian Federation is fully committed to its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and makes every effort to complete the destruction of the remaining chemical weapons in the shortest possible time.

Namely, six out of the seven chemical weapons destruction facilities that were constructed and operated under the programme have already completed the destruction of existing stockpiles. Four facilities—Maradykovsky in the Kirov Region, Leonidvoka in the Penza Region, Pochev in the Bryansk Region, and Shchuchye in the Kurgan Region—completed destruction activities in 2015. Two facilities—Gorny in the Saratov Region and Kambarka in the Udmurt Republic—completed destruction activities in 2005 and 2009, respectively.

As at 28 November 2016, the amount of chemical weapons destroyed in the Russian Federation totalled 38,460 agent tonnes, or 96.2 percent of the overall stockpile. The destruction of the remaining stockpile (1,507 tonnes) is under way at the seventh facility, Kizner, in the Udmurt Republic. The completion of the destruction of all chemical weapons is planned for no later than 2020.

The Convention is one of the most successful disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms. We consistently advocate strict adherence to its provisions by all States parties to the Convention. The destruction of Syria’s military chemical capability is a clear and unprecedented example of the effectiveness of the Convention, for which the OPCW was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. A number of important steps contributed to making this complex operation possible: first, close interaction among the OPCW States Parties, primarily the Russian Federation and the United States of America; second, the firm commitment of the Syrian authorities to a conscious political decision to abandon its



chemical weapons programme; and, finally, the international community's choice in favour of common sense.

The successful completion of the destruction of chemical weapons removed from Syria in 2016 is an undeniable achievement. The elimination of the last former chemical weapons production facility which, due to the security situation, is not currently accessible is just a matter of time. This leads us to the conclusion that the chemical demilitarisation of Syria is no longer an emergency.

In this regard, we believe that all further work in this area should be carried out strictly within the framework of the working agenda of the OPCW on a pragmatic and depoliticised basis. We see no alternative to pursuing further interaction between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and Damascus for clarification of outstanding technical issues. We welcome the significant progress achieved within the framework of this cooperation and, in particular, the agreement to additionally declare a number of laboratories of the Barzah research centre under Article III of the Convention.

Having said that, we note with deep regret and concern the continued politicisation of the work of the OPCW, the integrity and well-deserved authority of which have been sacrificed to the opportunistic interest of the States that have not yet abandoned their global ambitions. The Russian Federation is interested in ensuring that the OPCW, in line with the decisions of the Third Review Conference, remains efficient, capable of responding promptly and adequately to new challenges and threats, acts strictly within this international treaty, and takes decision on all matters by consensus.

However, the anti-Syrian—and, in essence, sanctions-based—decision that was rammed through by vote at the Eighty-Third Session of the Executive Council effectively split this policy-making body of the Organisation and undermined the tradition of consensus, which has been developed and protected through the joint efforts of the Member States for many years, though their views and approaches to various issues did not always coincide. The Russian Federation voted against this decision, which was based on absolutely unconvincing—at times even biased—accusations against Damascus brought by the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We previously circulated unofficial papers elaborating our assessments of the JIM reports.

Today, we are witnessing how the efforts of the opportunistic globalists have resulted in the trampling of the rights of a State Party to the Convention. How many more people in the world are to fall victim to their militant geopolitical ambitions to make the finally draw lessons from the well-known tragic events in the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, and now in Syria?

It is also utterly unacceptable for the OPCW, a platform of a purely technical nature, that the sponsors of such a decision did not even hide their goal to fulfil their political ambition, bypassing the United Nations Security Council. Unfortunately, such ill-conceived actions in the OPCW framework result in undermining an increasing number of provisions of the Convention, namely the ones contained in Articles III, VII, and IX. We would also like to stress that the measures stipulated in the decision pertaining to the scientific research centre in Barzah and Jamrayah are fundamentally at odds with the provisions of Article XI, which provides for non-discriminatory access of all States Parties to scientific and technological achievements in chemistry. Such a destructive policy erodes confidence both in the States

Parties to the Convention and the Organisation as a whole, where double standards are being applied increasingly.

Following the Syrian pattern, in 2016 it became possible to remove the remaining Category 2 chemical weapons from Libya and destroy them. For that, we express our gratitude to Libya, the OPCW Technical Secretariat, and the contributing States. At the same time, there are still a number of inconsistencies and discrepancies in the initial Libyan declaration. The Russian Federation drew the attention of the Member States of the Council to this matter during its Eighty-Third Session and distributed a national document in which the Secretariat was asked to deal with issues of particular concern to us and to report to the Council by its next regular session.

Certain actors are also trying to extrapolate the precedent of the OPCW being used as an instrument to overthrow an undesirable legitimate government in Sudan that may turn out to be the next link in the chain of the above-mentioned tragic events for the destiny of peoples of sovereign States. We find it unacceptable, as it was the case with Syria, to deprive Khartoum of the right to conduct its own national investigation of the insinuations stated in the Amnesty International Report on Darfur in full compliance with Article VII of the Convention. We strongly recommend that the delegations wishing once again to assume the role both of judges and prosecutors to stop their manipulations aimed at undermining the Convention, which contains precise tools to clarify and eliminate such quasi-concerns.

We are convinced that one of the most important objectives of the Organisation is to make the Convention universal. We consistently bring up this issue during discussions at all levels with those States that have not yet joined the legal framework of the Convention. Unfortunately, the sponsors of the anti-Syrian decision taken at the Eighty-Third Session of the Council created extremely unfavourable conditions for the Convention to become universal in the foreseeable future.

Another relevant objective toward achieving the main goal of the Convention—the comprehensive and effective prohibition of chemical weapons—is the need to bring the legislation of all States Parties to the Convention in full compliance with the provisions of this international treaty. Reliable control should be established over the national chemical industry, as envisaged by Article VI of the Convention. It is vital, however, to maintain a balance between effective verification and minimised verification pressure on chemical enterprises to avoid hampering the development of international cooperation within the peaceful chemical industry.

Against the backdrop of what could be referred to as the blatant anti-Syrian campaign launched not only in the OPCW, a truly serious problem is being kept in the dark either unwittingly or deliberately: the growing challenges and threats of chemical terrorism in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq and Syria. Now it is obvious to everyone that terrorists not only use toxic chemicals, but also have their own production capability for the synthesis of fully-fledged chemical warfare agents, as well as far-reaching precursor supply chains. There is a real threat that the zone of the risk of “chemical” terrorism may spread to countries outside of the Middle East.

Experts at the Defence Ministry of the Russian Federation routinely find in Syria’s province of Aleppo direct evidence of terrorists using chemical weapons—not only chlorine and white phosphorous, but also sulfur mustard—against civilians and government forces. The Russian

military found, among other things, unexploded terrorist artillery ammunition containing toxic agents and collected soil samples at the site of their use. All of the physical evidence collected was provided to the Syrian National Authority in accordance with the established procedure. We expect that the OPCW, being a specialised organisation, will take all necessary measures to investigate the above-mentioned incidents.

Since the Secretariat stated that the sites of these terrorist attacks could not be visited due to security concerns, the Syrian side will provide the collected samples and material and physical evidence to OPCW experts in accordance with the established procedures and pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

What happened in Aleppo once again demonstrates the need for an impartial and depoliticised approach to the chemical incidents in Syria. We believe that only indisputable facts, rather than assumptions, speculations, or blatant provocations can serve as a basis for serious political and legal decisions.

Unfortunately, the problem of “chemical” terrorism cannot be fully resolved within the existing international mechanisms, including the Chemical Weapons Convention, the main objectives of which are chemical disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Russian Federation has repeatedly called upon the international community, primarily the United Nations Security Council and the OPCW, to stem the tide of “chemical” terrorism. At the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva last March, the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation put forward an initiative to draw up a new international convention against acts of “chemical” terrorism, which was further developed. Following the proposal of a number of like-minded countries, it was decided to extend the scope of the initiative to the challenge and threats of “biological” terrorism as well. We believe that the States Parties to the Convention thereby have been given a unique opportunity to contribute to the development of what we believe to be a very significant and urgent document. This also fully applies to the OPCW itself, the only specialised international organisation that has unique and relevant scientific and technological potential and expertise.

In this regard, we note the importance of the launch of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW. The Russian Federation is ready to contribute to its work provided that it will be based on a consensus, will not undermine the fundamental principles of the Convention, do not upset the careful balance between the rights and obligations of the States Parties to the Convention, and that the results of its activities do not extend beyond the scope of the Convention.

Mr Chairperson, in conclusion, I would like to assure you that the Russian delegation is committed to working constructively within our forum and that you can count on our full support.

We request that this statement be circulate as an official document of the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the States Parties.