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Mr. Chairman, Director-General, Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:

As we celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year of the 1997 entry-into-force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we need to recognize its many accomplishments – namely, the most universal arms control and disarmament treaty today with 192 States Parties; the safe and verified destruction of over 69,000 metric tons of deadly chemical agents, representing 96% of declared stockpiles in seven possessor countries; over 6,300 OPCW inspections at 235 military and 2,255 industry sites in 87 countries; and innumerable education, training, and outreach workshops, seminars, and speeches around the world.

Mr. Chairman,

We have indeed come a long and successful way since the Convention was opened for signature in 1993. But we must not rest on our laurels, especially given the many challenges today of chemical weapons use in the Middle East and in Malaysia by States Parties, non-member States, and non-state actors. We remain particularly troubled by the reports and findings of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) that a State Party has used both chlorine and Sarin nerve agent at least four times and that a non-state actor, the Islamic State, has used mustard agent at least twice.

Also disturbing is the lack of a complete and verified Declaration by a State Party, described by the Director-General as filled with “gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies.” I commend the great majority of the States Parties and the Technical Secretariat for pursuing full disclosure of these blatant violations of the Convention, and for the OPCW-UN investigations for seeking full accountability of the criminal perpetrators of these inhumane and vicious chemical attacks.

Mr. Chairman,

We must leave no stone unturned in protecting the global norm of the Convention; in ensuring that all violations will be thoroughly, professionally, and fairly investigated; in establishing a world free of chemical weapons; and in preventing chemical weapons from reemerging.

But these historic and worthy goals to help build a more secure and sustainable world require specific steps forward, namely, pursuing full universality of the Convention by reaching out to the four remaining countries – Egypt, Israel, North Korea, and South Sudan – to join the Convention and give up any and all chemical weapons stockpiles; pressing the many States Parties which have not yet completed their national implementation of the Convention to do so now; and verifying the ongoing safe destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles.

We commend Russia for completing the safe destruction of its seventh and last chemical weapons stockpile in Udmurtia in September, but also give much credit to the United States, Germany, Britain, and many other members of the Global Partnership who committed over \$2 billion and much critical technical expertise in partnering with Russia for a safe and timely program. Also deserving much credit for Russia's success are the many local and regional communities which helped facilitate this contentious process, including Green Cross International which established local outreach and information programs, dialogues, US-Russia exchange programs, and offices. Without this facilitation at the local, regional, national, and international levels, both the US and Russian demilitarization programs would not be where they are today. We also urge Russia to follow through in safely destroying its hundreds of thousands of tons of toxic liquid waste from its first-stage neutralization process before these dangerous legacies impact public health and the environment.

The OPCW Director-General, Technical Secretariat, and States Parties also deserve much credit for the establishment of several important advisory groups, including the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach, the Scientific Advisory Board, the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, and the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities.

Let me finally emphasize the growing importance of public outreach, civil society involvement, capacity-building, and transparency to strengthening public awareness and the effectiveness of the OPCW. As many of you are aware, some of us in the NGO community established the CWC Coalition, a global network of interested non-governmental experts, stakeholders, and civil society representatives eight years ago to expand public information on our mutual efforts. Over these eight years we have now expanded this global support network by a factor of ten to 200 registrations this year from over 70 NGOs from 40 or more countries. We expect this network will continue to grow for next year's Five-Year Review Conference. We are grateful for the personal and financial support from the OPCW, especially the External Relations Division, from the German, Canadian, and Norwegian delegations, and from Green Cross Switzerland.

Thank you for your kind attention, and I wish for this statement to be made part of the final CSP record and posted on the external server and website.