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**Statement by
Ambassador Venu Rajamony,
Permanent Representative of India to the OPCW
at the 22nd Session of the Conference of States
Parties**

27 November- 1 December 2017

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Director General,

Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, I would like to offer warm felicitations, on behalf of my delegation, to the distinguished Ambassador of Morocco on assuming the Chair of the 22nd Session of the Conference of States Parties. My delegation is confident that under your able leadership, the Conference will be guided to a successful conclusion. We would also like to congratulate the newly elected Vice Chairpersons and other officers.

May I also take this opportunity to convey my delegation's deep appreciation for the excellent work done by Ambassador Dr. Christoph Israng of Germany as the Chair of the 21st Session of the Conference of States Parties.

My delegation appreciates the work of the Technical Secretariat under the leadership of Director General Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü and acknowledges the efforts made towards the implementation of the Convention and in advancing the common goal of a world free of chemical weapons. This will be the final session of the Conference of States Parties that H.E. Ambassador Üzümcü attends as Director General. My delegation commends Ambassador Üzümcü for his immense and lasting contribution to the organization. We value his continued guidance and contribution in the remaining period of his tenure, including by putting in place a smooth transition to the new leadership.

On behalf of my delegation, I congratulate and welcome Ambassador Fernando Arias of Spain as the next Director-General of OPCW. The fact that he was able to secure the unanimous endorsement of the Executive Council is testament to his abilities as well as his suitability for the post. We are confident that he will lead this organization to great heights. We assure our complete support to him.

My delegation would like to congratulate the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), based in Algiers, Algeria, and the International Master Courses in Protection Against CBRNe Events at the University of Rome Tor Vergata, for being the joint recipients of the 2017 OPCW–The Hague Award.

My delegation endorses and associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of NAM States Parties to the CWC and China. My delegation also commends the excellent work done by the distinguished Ambassador as Chair of the NAM States Parties to the CWC and China.

Mr. Chairman,

2017 marks the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) as well as the founding of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. India attaches great importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and stands for its full, effective and non-discriminatory

implementation. In this context, we welcome the completion of the full and verified destruction of the declared chemical weapons stockpile by the Russian Federation. We commend the Russian Federation and the OPCW for their professionalism and dedication. With this, 96.3 per cent of all chemical weapon stockpiles declared by possessor States have been destroyed under OPCW verification. We urge all possessor States to take necessary steps to expedite their destruction processes.

A number of States Parties have commemorated the 20th anniversary of the Convention by organizing various workshops, training programmes, and industry awareness programmes. India has conducted number of programmes including Chemical Industry Awareness Programme on CWC held on 12 October 2017 in Vapi, Gujarat and International Phosgene Conference on 31 August 2017 in Vadodara, Gujarat. Similar events will be also held in the coming months.

As we conclude the celebrations of the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the OPCW, we urge the remaining States that are not Parties to the Convention to consider acceding to the Convention at the earliest.

Mr. Chairman,

It has been India's consistent position that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anybody, under any circumstances, cannot be justified and the perpetrators of such abhorrent acts must be held accountable. The use of chemical weapons is in complete disregard of humanity, and is reprehensible and contrary to the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention as well as accepted international legal norms.

India views the Chemical Weapons Convention as a unique, non-discriminatory disarmament instrument which serves as a model for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

To this end, my delegation welcomes the efforts made and the progress achieved so far in the matter of destruction of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities. We hope that the remaining task of destruction will be completed in the earliest possible time.

We welcome the ongoing high level consultations between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Technical Secretariat on the initial declaration by the Syrian Arab Republic and have taken note of the findings of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). We recognize and appreciate the progress achieved under challenging circumstances and look forward to continuing cooperation between the Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic.

My delegation takes note of the Seventh Report prepared by the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and the diverse views on the same. We also note the work done so far by the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and look forward to receiving its reports on its ongoing activities.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation is deeply concerned with reports of acquisition of chemical weapons and their delivery systems by the so-called 'Islamic State' or ISIS and continuous use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals in Syria and Iraq by terrorists. We believe that our work in the OPCW should help to eliminate the possibility of any future use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

One of the core commitments pledged by each Member State to the Convention is to promote the peaceful uses of chemistry. This calls for international exchange of scientific and technical information and increased flow of chemicals and equipment across national borders for peaceful purposes. The provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention should not be used for hampering these trans-national movements. India welcomes the renewed emphasis given by the OPCW to the implementation of Article XI and encourages further collaboration between the Technical Secretariat and the States Parties in this regard. My delegation welcomes the holding of the Second Review & Evaluation Workshop on Article XI on November 21, 2017. We look forward to the report to be presented by the Facilitator of Article XI, outlining the ideas and recommendations which emerged during this workshop.

We note that the OPCW has emerged as a forum for consultation and cooperation between the States Parties including through exchange of ideas and discussion of best practices in the area of chemical safety. We appreciate the initiative by OPCW to intensify safety programmes. We request that these programmes also focus on small and medium enterprises, in order to assist them in dealing with challenges with regard to chemical safety and security. My delegation also notes the efforts of the Chairpersons of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors.

Mr. Chairman,

OPCW has attained much success towards achieving its goal of a world free of chemical weapons and the threat of their use. However, there is no room for complacency as the ever-changing global security environment presents many challenges. These include the discovery of new toxic chemicals and technological advancements in deployment and dissemination of chemical weapons. Emergence of non-state actors further complicates the situation. The possibility of toxic chemicals falling into the hands of non-state actors, including terrorists, is no longer hypothetical. This calls for enhanced vigilance and increased adaptive capacity for the organisation.

In such a scenario, effective national implementation provides a safeguard against such threats. We urge all Member States, which have not done so yet, to give priority to national implementation measures as contained in Article VII of the Convention, including through drafting and adoption of legislation as well as capacity building for effective implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation commends the work done by the Technical Secretariat and the Facilitators of the OPCW Programme and Budget for 2018. We hope that the budget will be adopted by consensus.

We value the importance of education and outreach programmes in achieving the goals of the Convention. We welcome the work done by Advisory Board for Education and Outreach (ABEO) in this regard. India also acknowledges the significance of the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). We are hopeful that all the recommendations of the Advisory Boards would be subject to detailed deliberations and decisions are arrived at through consensus.

India is cognizant of the fact that, often, science and technology is far ahead of our understanding of disarmament and non-proliferation. The interface between emerging technologies and their implications on international security is of vital importance, especially in view of the realities of development which call for a synergy with science and technology. It is therefore important to view the developments in science and technology from an interdisciplinary approach.

India tabled a resolution "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament" at the 72nd session of the UNGA First Committee. It is heartening to note that the resolution was adopted without a vote, by consensus, reflecting the collective will of member states. The resolution requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session a report on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts, with an annex containing submissions from Member States giving their views on the matter.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation recognizes the efforts of the two Co-Chairpersons of the Open Ended Working Group on Future Priorities (OEWG-FP) of the Organisation. The work of the OEWG-FP should be guided and driven by States Parties and should address all issues related to the future of the Organisation in a balanced and comprehensive manner. We would like to see the work of this OEWG-FP progress through established channels of the policy-making organs (PMOs) bearing in mind time-tested methods of work of our Organisation, particularly decision-making by consensus.

I would request that this Statement be circulated as an official document of the Conference and posted on OPCW's public website.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
