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NEW ZEALAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LYNDAL WALKER
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW AT THE
TWENTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Thank you Mr Chairperson.

New Zealand joins others in congratulating you on your appointment as Chairperson of the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and assures you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express New Zealand's appreciation to Ambassador Christoph Israng of Germany, for ably steering the Conference during the past year.

Our thanks must also go to Director-General Üzümcü. Director-General, this Organisation owes an enormous debt of gratitude to you for your guidance, leadership and commitment to the OPCW's objectives and ideals during the course of your term. This Organisation faces a raft of challenges but, under your able guidance, it is striving to live up to its ideals. You can be proud of what you and the OPCW have achieved throughout your term and New Zealand extends its gratitude for your commitment, dedication, and professionalism.

Turning towards the future, New Zealand congratulates Ambassador Fernando Arias on his consensus nomination as incoming Director-General. We know that this Organisation will continue to be in very capable hands. You have New Zealand's full support and we wish you every success.

New Zealand is fully committed to the objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The OPCW has been a model of international cooperation, and there have been many milestones since its creation twenty years ago. In this respect, we congratulate Libya and the Russian Federation on the completion of the full destruction of their respective declared stockpiles of chemical weapons. This is a success, not only for the States in question, but for the OPCW and those members that have contributed to this important work.

But these milestones aside, there is - regrettably - little cause for celebration when it comes to the issue of the Syrian Arab Republic.

New Zealand has repeatedly expressed our deep concerns regarding the developments in the Syrian Arab Republic. The OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism's (JIM) seventh report has produced two clear conclusions: first, that the Syrian Government - a State



Party to this Convention – once again used sarin on 4 April 2017; and second, that ‘ISIL’ used sulfur mustard in September 2016.

New Zealand condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances. But it is not good enough that States Parties meet here, and then simply repeat those same words, without taking further action or condemning those who bear responsibility for such violations. This Organisation will be judged on its actions, not on its words.

The use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Government is a violation of the Convention and relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. Such actions represent the worst of humanity. As we have said on countless occasions, New Zealand has full confidence in the impartial and professional work that has been carried out by the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM), the Declarations Assessment Team (DAT), and the JIM. Regrettably, the importance of each of the FFM, DAT, and JIM has only been underlined with each new instance of chemical weapons use that comes to light. It is the responsibility of all States Parties to make sure that States Parties live up to their obligations and responsibilities and comply with the Convention. In this regard, New Zealand looks forward to further consultations on a decision which will address the use of Syrian chemical weapon use. We also note our regret that the mandate of the JIM has not yet been extended.

New Zealand remains a strong supporter of the OPCW and continues to support the Organisation across the full spectrum of its work. This year, New Zealand contributed a further EUR 100,000 to the Syria Trust Fund.

The OPCW stands at a crossroads as it draws closer to the completion of its destruction activities. To that end, we extend our thanks to Canada and South Africa for their able co-chairing of the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities. For our part, New Zealand envisages an organisation which retains its core capabilities, supports national implementation, promotes regional cooperation, leverages the knowledge, skills and capabilities of relevant stakeholders, and is able to respond quickly and effectively to new challenges and threats.

New Zealand was also pleased to sponsor the OPCW’s chemical security workshop, held in September 2017, as a contribution to the consideration of the OPCW’s future priorities.

Of particular note, New Zealand welcomes the work led by Australia and Switzerland on the weaponisation of central nervous system-acting chemicals in law enforcement, and has been pleased to co-sponsor the joint paper submitted to this Conference. We share the concerns expressed by numerous States Parties regarding the serious health and safety risks posed by such chemicals, and the possibility of their deliberate misuse. We look forward to engaging with States on this, and other topics, as we consider the future of the OPCW in the lead-up to the 2018 Review Conference.

Finally, New Zealand also wishes to register our concerns regarding the accreditation process for NGOs to attend this Conference. As noted in the joint statement, the 2013 Review Conference agreed to open the annual Conference to civil society groups, yet this decision has been undermined by a small number of States Parties, who have objected to the participation of certain NGOs, including Human Rights Watch (an ECOSOC-accredited NGO). This is a damaging and deeply regrettable development. It is counter-productive, and

contrary to the OPCW's values of openness and transparency. The OPCW needs the support of a wide range of stakeholders in order to undertake its important work.

Mr Chairperson, New Zealand will continue to work constructively with other States Parties, the Secretary-General, the Technical Secretariat, and civil society in pursuit of the Convention's goal of a safer and chemical weapons free world. New Zealand is fully supportive of the OPCW and its efforts to achieve these important objectives.

I ask that this statement be treated as an official document of this Conference.

Thank you for your attention.

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