

Statement by H.E Ambassador Shujjat Ali Rathore
Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the OPCW, on the occasion of the
4th Special Session of the Conference of States Parties

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we gather here today for this special session of the Conference of Parties, we should be fully conscious of the heavy responsibility we all bear. The CWC is one of the success stories in the field of arms control and disarmament. The almost universal support the convention enjoys owes itself to the spirit of consensus and fair play. We must be mindful of the long term impact of any decision adopted by this session on the CWC and the future of the OPCW. While we all share the objective of strengthening the CWC mechanisms and the OPCW's capacity to deal with the threat of the use of chemical weapons, the last few weeks have been marked by deep disagreement over differences of approaches to achieve this goal.

2. Pakistan is strongly committed to the objectives and purposes of the Convention. We firmly believe in preserving the effectiveness, objectivity and credibility of the OPCW's verification regime which is at the heart of the States Parties unswerving support for the CWC. There is a need to guard against distortions in the mandate of the Organization which could render it susceptible to political manoeuvring. The OPCW should not become an arena for great power competition. We have been witness to the erosion of other disarmament forums and arrangements due to selfish considerations of certain states for their own security to the detriment of the principle of undiminished security for all. Let us preserve the OPCW role as an independent and durable structure in the global order that enables all nations to live and prosper under conditions of peace and security.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Pakistan is opposed to the use of chemical weapons anywhere by anyone. We support the objective of strengthening the global norm against the use of chemical weapons. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons should be identified and held to account. However, our deliberations on strengthening the capacity of the OPCW to deal with the cases of use of chemical weapons should be underpinned by the stipulations of the CWC itself.

4. Pakistan recognizes the mandate of the OPCW and the important role it ought to play in reported cases of chemical weapons use. This role for the OPCW has been unambiguously defined in the CWC. We strongly believe that various suggestions we have in front of us to expand the OPCW's remit to attribution are inconsistent with the technical nature of the work of the Technical Secretariat. It is for the States Parties to examine issues of attribution and retribution in the light of the technical findings of the Secretariat.

5. The establishment of the JIM in 2015 was actually a reflection of the broad understanding between the states parties that a mechanism other than OPCW should deal with the issue of attribution. It was a right decision to keep the OPCW away from a potentially divisive issue which could undermine the almost universal support for the CWC and the OPCW's valuable work to carry out verification measures provided for in the CWC.

6. The JIM mechanism failed to elicit consensus due to differences among certain members of the Security Council. While definitely politics was involved, the failure of the JIM also highlighted the need to strictly follow the technical procedures and principles stipulated in the CWC for the verification work of the OPCW. The solution, therefore, does not lie in parallel mechanism that could

move us further away from the provisions of the Convention but in approaches that could ensure that the verification principles and protocols of the Convention are strictly adhered to even in the most extraordinary circumstances. Only such approaches can build the necessary confidence among states and squeeze the space for rejecting verification outcomes citing politicization of the verification process. Pakistan stands ready to work along these lines with all other States Parties with a view to ensuring the cases of chemical weapons use are effectively dealt with. This would, however, entail careful deliberations among the States. The 4th CWC Review Conference planned for November 2018 would have been the ideal occasion with technical preparatory work in the preceding period.

7. To the contrary, we are witnessing undue haste in proposing that the Secretariat put in place an arrangement 'to identify the perpetrators'. Such a significant proposal concerning the mandate of the OPCW has been tabled without prior consultations involving all states parties. There are several technical questions and political aspects which need extensive deliberations among the states parties. Most importantly, the draft decision concerning the proposed attribution mechanism does not specify any measure to guard against the misuse of the mechanism for political purposes by powerful states.

8. Bearing in mind the devastating impact of any divided decision on the legitimacy and credibility of the OPCW, my delegation strongly calls upon the parties concerned to work towards a consensus document which upholds the CWC objective as well as the objectivity and technical competence of the Technical Secretariat. My capital is closely following the developments and we would not become a party to any decision that undermines the CWC and the role of the OPCW as stipulated by the Convention.