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**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DELIVERED BY H. E. AMBASSADOR REIMER R. NIELSEN
AT THE SIXTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson
Mr Director-General
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and gentlemen

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding country Croatia^{*}, the candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia^{*}, Montenegro^{*}, and Iceland⁺, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Andorra, Georgia, Monaco, Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Ukraine and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

Mr Chairperson,

On behalf of the European Union, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome back Ambassador Peter Goosen in the chair of the Executive Council. As always, Ambassador, you can count on the full support and cooperation of the European Union and we stand ready to work hard and constructively to make this session of the Council a successful one. Allow me also to welcome Mr Konstantin Gavrilov as the new Director of the Secretariat for Support to the Policy-Making Organs. I am convinced that he will carry out his responsibilities as effectively as his predecessor, Mr Alexander Khodakov, and with an equally unique personal touch.

We have before us a relatively light agenda for this session of the Council, as is usual for the February session. However, the context in which this session takes place is both noteworthy and important.

The European Union welcomes the decision of the Conference of the States Parties at its Sixteenth Session regarding the final extended deadline of 29 April 2012. This was a very important step in preserving the integrity and effectiveness of the Convention and the credibility of the OPCW. While the fact that the two main possessor States have stated that

* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.



they will not be able to meet the final extended deadline is a cause for concern, we are now able to address the expiration of the deadline in a constructive manner which will ensure continuation of effective verification in a transparent manner.

Recent developments concerning Libya have given rise to certain concerns as regards additional, undeclared stockpiles of chemical weapons. Nevertheless, the European Union is encouraged by the cooperation provided by the Libyan authorities to the OPCW in resolving the issue. We urge Libya and the Technical Secretariat to continue this constructive approach with a view to provide full transparency on these matters to the OPCW. We welcome the new declaration submitted by Libya yesterday afternoon and encourage Libya to continue in this positive vein. A detailed plan and a completion date for destruction of the entire stockpile should be presented at the earliest possible stage, in accordance with the decision of the Conference of the States Parties on the final extended deadline. In addition we express our gratitude to those who have provided assistance in this regard.

It should also be noted that the situation in Libya with regards to the chemical weapons can provide important lessons for rapid response by the OPCW in crisis and post-crisis situations which would be important for the discussions on the future of the Organisation. We look forward to addressing this issue when and as appropriate.

Regarding the nature of continued verification of converted facilities, the European Union has consistently called for a speedy conclusion which would close this particular gap in the verification regime. The absence of verification at a growing number of facilities is a cause for great concern and the European Union calls on the parties concerned to spare no effort in reaching a solution at this session of the Council. Should it prove impossible to reach consensus on a general solution, the Council must discharge its mandate of ensuring verification of these facilities through individual agreements prepared by the Technical Secretariat.

The Council will also receive the reports of the Technical Secretariat on Articles X and XI, and we look forward to continued discussions on these important issues in a constructive manner in the relevant facilitations. The European Union also believes that global anti-terrorism is a very important issue and that all actors involved should strive for a coherent effort, fully exploring possible synergies and efficiencies.

The current zeitgeist in our part of the world is characterised by modesty, austerity and cost-efficiency, reflecting the current financial and economic crisis. The Executive Council should bear this in mind when considering how to streamline and rationalise the working methods of the policy-making organs and the Technical Secretariat. As for the Technical Secretariat, under the able stewardship of His Excellency Ambassador Üzümez, we have full confidence that further optimisation and efficiency measures are introduced, ensuring full and effective use of available resources. Needless to say, this should be done in a transparent manner in consultation with the policy-making organs as appropriate.

Looking forward in broader terms, the European Union takes great interest in the future priorities of the OPCW and the forthcoming Third Review Conference. The Director-General initiated the discussions on the future last year and as the future approaches, the States Parties should be prepared to take the necessary decisions setting out the framework for our future discussions. In the meantime, we have full confidence in the Director-General's leadership in this process.

In our discussions to come, the European Union finds it of the utmost importance that we remember the overall purpose of the Convention—to ensure that the full-fledged prohibition on chemical weapons is fully and effectively adhered to and enforced by all. Or—to quote the preamble of the Convention—to ‘exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons’. Everything else is—in principle—a means to that end, not an end in itself.

The most immediate and significant threat to the prohibition, and to peace and security in the context of the Convention, is the existing stockpiles of chemical weapons. Verifying the destruction of these chemical weapons will remain at the heart of the OPCW for the time to come. In addition, some of the remaining non-States Parties may possess chemical weapons, and universality of the Convention—ensuring the destruction of these possible stockpiles—is of paramount importance.

Nevertheless, the existing stockpiles are being destroyed as envisaged by the Convention. As they diminish, the security environment changes while new threats emerge. Therefore the focus of the OPCW will change from destruction to prevention: prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons. The European Union believes this to be the core issue of discussions on the future, not a priority among others.

This is nothing new. The name of the Organisation is ‘the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons’. Prohibiting something—in this case chemical weapons—entails destroying what is in existence and preventing its re-emergence. In this way, destruction and prevention are mutually reinforcing ambitions—not mutually exclusive. And they both serve the overall goal of prohibition.

This is the lens through which the European Union views the different elements put forward in discussions on the future priorities of the OPCW. It is important, however, that when we all discuss detailed recommendations we also continue to develop our broader vision and common understanding for the future of the OPCW. This is important as guidance when we walk into the tall grass.

When addressing the future priorities of the OPCW, the European Union, as stated, attaches great importance to both destruction and prevention. To this end, ways of strengthening the industry verification regime, industry being the most likely origin of re-emergence, should be examined, as should ways in which we can renew our collective efforts at enhancing national implementation. Full and effective national implementation—legislative and administrative—of the Convention is of the utmost importance. In our view, this is how we prevent re-emergence and the illegal use of toxic chemicals, while enabling the transfer of chemicals for purposes not prohibited under the Convention. This is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving and sustaining a full and effective prohibition.

We should also look at ways in which we can strengthen Articles X and XI, contributing to enhancing and enforcing the prohibition on chemical weapons, which is the overall purpose of the Convention.

A single unified process addressing the future priorities of the Organisation is desirable. Given the complexity of the issues at hand, however, it is perhaps also difficult to achieve and the discussion will probably develop simultaneously along different tracks. However, the European Union is of the view that all the relevant processes should be drawn together,

creating synergy and convergence rather than divergence. As we move ahead, we have full confidence in the efforts and contributions of the Director General.

Mr Chairperson,

All States Parties to the Convention share a common ambition of a world free of chemical weapons, thereby enhancing our collective security. As the future draws near, the European Union stands ready to work with all partners to ensure a smooth transition from achieving a world free of chemical weapons to sustaining a world free of chemical weapons.

I thank you and request that this statement will be treated as an official document of this session of the Council.

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