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

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 you know, the European Union stands ready to work hard and constructively to make also this session of the Council a successful one. As this is the last session of the Council chaired by you, I furthermore wish to express the appreciation of the European Union for the great dedication and tireless efforts you have put into preserving the integrity of the Convention and facilitating the solution of some very difficult issues faced by the OPCW.

We are also saddened to see this session of the Council begin without our now former Legal Adviser, Ambassador Santiago Oñate Laborde, whose invaluable contributions we have greatly appreciated. We are happy to learn that while having left the legal office he will continue to be with us in a new capacity.

On 29 April 2012, the final extended deadline for destruction of all chemical weapons stockpiles expired. This was only last Sunday. It goes without saying that the European Union is greatly concerned over the fact that stockpiles still remain in existence. The Executive Council will hear reports from the Director-General to this effect shortly. Fortunately, thanks to the efforts of successive chairpersons of the Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties, as well as all the States Parties, the policy-making organs of

* 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.



the OPCW have been able to address this issue in a timely and appropriate manner. All the necessary decisions have been taken. We must now look to the future and work together to implement these decisions.

The European Union has full confidence in the commitment of the possessor States to destroy their remaining stockpiles as soon as at all possible and to provide full transparency on their destruction plans and the progress achieved. This confidence is further augmented by the additional measures to be implemented in the event that the deadline is not met. In our opinion these measures will address all the concerns expressed, and thus the Council does not need to take any further action at this stage. The way ahead is clear.

At the Sixty-Seventh Session of the Executive Council, the Council adopted a decision on the newly declared chemical weapons in Libya. We are pleased to learn that with the support of Canada and Germany the initial inspection of these weapons by the OPCW inspectors has taken place. This is a very important step in further addressing the issue. Furthermore we are also pleased that Libya has submitted a plan for destruction of the remaining chemical weapons. The European Union encourages Libya to maintain momentum on this issue, and we wish to assure Libya of the full support of the European Union in this regard. We look forward to receiving further updates on the situation. Related to this, we also look forward to discussing what lessons can be learnt from the Libya experience in terms of rapid response by the OPCW in crisis and post-crisis situations involving chemical weapons. This was and is an unprecedented situation for the OPCW and we may wish to consider whether the OPCW's capacity to deal with such situations should be improved.

The Third Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Convention is rapidly approaching. It is necessary that we begin our preparations immediately and without further delay to ensure a successful outcome. The European Union is therefore of the opinion that the Council must decide at this session, as mandated by the Conference of the States Parties, to establish the Open-Ended Working Group for the Third Review Conference. We expect that the work of the OEWG will provide a vital component of the preparations for the Review Conference, which will be fully reflected in its outcome. Other procedural decisions paving the way for the preparations of the Conference may be necessary as well.

In that regard, the European Union considers the future priorities of the OPCW of the utmost importance. Our position on this issue is well known: ensuring a full-fledged prohibition on chemical weapons through destroying what is in existence and preventing any future re-emergence is the overall object and purpose of the Convention. The immediate threat to this object and purpose is the existing stockpiles. As they are destroyed, and as new threats emerge, the threat environment changes. As a consequence the OPCW must adapt itself to this new environment. This would entail greater emphasis on preventing re-emergence through for instance strengthening the effectiveness of the industry verification regime and ensuring full and effective implementation of the Convention at the national level.

The European Union believes that the Third Review Conference must also address the future priorities and direction of the OPCW, which follows naturally from reviewing the past operation of the Convention. One examines the past when deciding on a course for the future. This should be taken into account when establishing the Open-Ended Working Group, perhaps through the creation of a sub-working group dealing with this important issue.

You recently conducted informal consultations on the working methods of the policy-making organs of the OPCW, as mandated by the Sixty-Seventh Session of the Executive Council. The European Union is very pleased with this initiative and we look forward to continuing discussions on this issue both during this session of the Council and in the time to come. Many innovative ideas on how to improve the working methods have been put forward, and we think it is essential that we continue this process. The fact that the Chemical Weapons Convention is one of the most successful and efficient multilateral instruments in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation should also be reflected in the way we conduct our business. We believe that we all share a common desire to make the work of the Council as efficient and rational as possible. To this effect, consideration could be given to establishing a follow-up mechanism to take this process further.

The European Union attaches great importance to Article XI of the Convention. Economic and technological development, while not being an end in itself in terms of the Convention, is an important element in promoting the overall prohibition on chemical weapons. The European Union stands ready to discuss concrete proposals put forward by States Parties which would further the implementation of this article.

Our interest in Article XI is not least reflected in the EU Council Decision in support of the OPCW, adopted by the Council of Ministers of the European Union on 23 March 2012 contributing more than EUR 2.1 million to the Organisation. Many of the activities supported by the European Union under this decision are aimed at strengthening economic and technological development. Moreover, the decision covers activities addressed to States Parties from all regional groups, including a number of activities addressed specifically to African States Parties. We invite all States Parties of the OPCW to participate as appropriate in these activities and make the most of them.

The current economic and financial situation affects us all. We fully support the Director-General's efforts in introducing further efficiency and cost-saving measures, ensuring the best use of the limited available resources. This would allow the OPCW to absorb additional expenses within existing resources. In the current economic situation everyone—including the OPCW—must be prepared to do more with less.

In conclusion, the OPCW is facing a challenging but also exciting future. While we were not fully where we hoped to be by 29 April 2012, we have certainly come a very long way. And we will continue to move forward towards achieving a world free of chemical weapons. We are confident that with the measures that will be implemented during this session of the Council, progress will be smooth. The challenge we must now turn our attention to is how to sustain a world free of chemical weapons.

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