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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ROBERT P. MIKULAK
UNITED STATES DELEGATION TO THE OPCW
AT THE SEVENTIETH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chair,

As the Seventieth Session of the Executive Council gets under way, my delegation looks forward working with you and the other Member States, so that this Council can continue to achieve successful outcomes.

I'd like to welcome our new colleagues from Mexico, Germany, and Pakistan to the Council. I also look forward to close cooperation with new colleagues in the Technical Secretariat—the new head of the inspectorate, Mr Marcelo Kos, who is already on board, and the new legal adviser, Mr Alberto Dojas, who begins 1 October.

At the same time, I want to express my warm thanks to Ambassador Takashi Koezuka of Japan, who is returning to his country, for his many contributions to our work. Since this is his last Council session, I also convey my appreciation to Mr Krzysztof Paturej, the Director of the Office of Special Projects, whose contributions to the OPCW go well beyond that role; his distinguished service includes chairmanship of both the Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties.

Madam Chair, Mr Director-General, distinguished delegates,

The U.S. continues to work hard towards complete destruction of its chemical weapons, in accordance with our commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We are making steady progress in building the chemical weapons destruction facilities at Pueblo, Colorado and Blue Grass, Kentucky. Representatives of the Executive Council will be invited to visit these facilities next spring to see for themselves the progress that we are achieving.

The United States has been working closely with the Libyan delegation and National Authority to help them assess destruction technologies for the chemical weapons previously hidden by the Qadhafi regime. We are impressed by Libya's commitment to resume chemical weapons destruction as soon as the necessary technical arrangements can be made and other conditions will allow. As I have indicated at previous Executive Council sessions, the United States looks forward to additional information that addresses where the hidden chemical weapons, and the chemical agent they contain, were produced.



The United States strongly supports the efforts of the working group to prepare for the Third Review Conference under the capable chairmanship of Ambassador Nassima Baghli of Algeria. As States Parties, we must look both backward and forward in time—backward to consider how effective the implementation of the Convention has been over the past five years to help orient our activities over the next five years, and forward to ensure the Convention remains an effective and relevant international instrument that is capable of handling new challenges in an evolving global security environment. In this context, I welcome the general approach outlined this morning by the distinguished Ambassador of Brazil.

Since the Convention was negotiated, many things have changed. Two and a half weeks ago, our Acting Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, Rose Gottemoeller gave an “ideas” speech here in this room, to highlight that the nature and quantity of publicly available information has changed radically in the last two decades. She asked how this development could assist in arms control verification. She urged all of us to look at the possibilities of this information and try to understand its potential benefits and costs. In a changing world, verification is at risk of becoming irrelevant if we do not incorporate new ideas into the process.

In many Member States, this is not an ordinary financial year. It is a year of austerity budgets. In fact, in many countries austerity measures have been put in place, including hiring freezes, pay freezes, or even pay cuts for government employees, as well as substantial reductions in travel and procurement. Consequently, the OPCW will need to reduce its costs, too.

In early September the Technical Secretariat revised the OPCW’s draft Programme and Budget for 2013. The revisions move us in the right direction. They seek to take into account the extraordinary financial stresses that face many governments and the concerns expressed in the facilitation regarding the Secretariat’s proposals. The OPCW is tightening its belt, but it must go further to reflect the resource restrictions faced by many of our governments. The United States strongly believes that OPCW mission requirements, i.e. meeting goals and objectives of the Convention, including the funding of the Third Review Conference, can be fulfilled with a budget significantly below that for 2012. With respect to the programme of work, the United States supports in principle the Director-General’s proposal to establish a unit to assist him with strategic planning. We do, however, share the view that the original proposal was overly ambitious. I intend to provide concrete suggestions on the proposed programme of work and budget when the Council addresses the relevant agenda item.

The U.S. delegation shares the concerns that led the distinguished Brazilian Ambassador to propose informal consultations on improving the working methods of the Council. We appreciate the productive discussions you held at the end of August, in which many delegations participated. My delegation believes it will be worthwhile to implement some of the suggestions within this Executive Council session on an experimental basis. We hope that the discussions will also continue before the Conference of the States Parties.

One important item on this Council session’s agenda is the Director-General’s report on the Technical Secretariat’s readiness to conduct challenge inspections or investigations of alleged use. This is a core function under the Convention. The United States applauds the

Secretariat's efforts to be prepared by maintaining and improving its ability to respond in a rapid and effective manner.

Let me now turn to a matter of grave concern to the United States involving a non-State Party to the Convention. On 23 July the Government of Syria publicly acknowledged that it possesses chemical weapons, and it underscored its willingness to use them in response to "external aggression." President Obama has made it clear that the use of chemical weapons in Syria would have enormous consequences. The UN Secretary-General and our Director-General have emphasised that the use of chemical weapons would be "reprehensible." Other world leaders have stressed the same point. We continue to call on the Syrian government to give up its chemical weapons arsenal and join the Chemical Weapons Convention, and we will continue to work with the international community toward that end. But while we wholeheartedly pursue that goal, prudence requires that the international community nevertheless make preparations. All States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention should consider the support and assistance that they could provide to victims if chemical weapons are used in Syria.

The United States also believes the OPCW could play an important role, and we support the actions the Director-General has taken with respect to contingency planning and operational readiness. Under Article X of the Convention, any State Party in the region could request assistance through the OPCW if it considers that chemical weapons have been used against it or if it is threatened by actions or activities of any State that are prohibited for States Parties by Article I. Further, as detailed in Part XI of the Convention's Verification Annex, the OPCW, if so requested, shall put its resources at the disposal of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the case of alleged use of chemical weapons involving a State not Party to the Convention. In this regard, we welcome and strongly support the successful efforts of the Director-General to reach an understanding with the United Nations on supplementary arrangements for implementation of the Relationship Agreement between the OPCW and the UN.

In joining the Chemical Weapons Convention, all States Parties express their determination, in the words of the preamble—"for the sake of all mankind, to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons, through the implementation of the provisions of this Convention." The world is now faced with a situation where the possibility of the use of chemical weapons is very real. The United States believes all States Parties to the Convention must demonstrate through their statements and actions that same determination to exclude completely the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

In conclusion, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Seventieth Session of the Council.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.