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REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DELIVERED BY H.E. DR KYRIACÓS KOUROS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
TO THE OPCW
AT THE SEVENTIETH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam 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 the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland+, and Serbia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Andorra, Georgia, Monaco, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

On behalf of the European Union, I wish to warmly welcome you back to the chair of the Executive Council. I take this opportunity to reiterate the European Union's commitment to working constructively with you, Madam Chairperson, to bring this session of the Council to a successful conclusion. We remain confident that under your able leadership, the work of the Council will be conducted as efficiently and effectively as possible, and you can rely on our full support in your efforts in this respect.

Before turning to substantive issues, the European Union would like to take this opportunity to recognise the excellent work of the Director of the Office of Special Projects, Mr Krzysztof Paturej, who will conclude his tenure at the end of this year. His dedication over the past seven years of service in the Technical Secretariat has been invaluable to the OPCW. We would also like to warmly welcome the new Director of the Inspectorate Division, Mr Marcelo Kos Silveira Campos, and assure him of our full cooperation.

Earlier this month, we marked the 15th anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention with a series of events organised here in The Hague whilst the

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

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



upcoming High Level Meeting in New York will also mark the occasion. As highlighted by the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms Catherine Ashton, in her statement of 3 September to mark the anniversary, the OPCW “continues to be a remarkable success and an inspiring example for effective multilateralism”. In the past fifteen years, we have collectively achieved a lot in our common efforts to fulfil the object and purpose of the Convention: the destruction of existing chemical weapons and the prevention of their re-emergence.

Whilst we can be encouraged by these achievements, we now also need to ensure that the Convention is in a position to successfully meet future challenges in light of the changing security environment and developments in science and technology. The European Union believes that the Third Review Conference should lay the groundwork for addressing the future priorities of the Organisation. We take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the work carried out by the Chair of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Third Review Conference, Ambassador Nassima Baghli of Algeria, and assure her of our continuous constructive engagement in this process.

Destruction of declared stockpiles will remain a priority for the Organisation and should continue under systematic verification. Whilst we are concerned that the final extended deadline was not met, we are convinced that the Possessor States will fulfil their commitments and complete destruction in the shortest time possible in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and its Verification Annex as well as the Decision of the last Conference of States Parties on the issue of the final extended deadlines for destruction of the remaining stockpiles.

Syria’s admission that it had a stockpile of chemical weapons, made public on 23 July this year, engendered a wave of international condemnation and renewed calls for it to join the Convention. The European Union is seriously concerned about the presence of these weapons in Syria. Their existence shows that the threat of chemical weapons is still very real. The European Union urges Syria to act responsibly in relation to these abhorrent weapons, not to use them under any circumstances, and to keep them secure. We recall that the use of chemical weapons is prohibited by general international law and by conventions including the 1925 Geneva Protocol, and stress that the use of chemical weapons by Syria would be unlawful.

The OPCW should remain vigilant. We therefore encourage the Director-General, with the support of the Technical Secretariat, to continue to follow the situation closely and maintain the necessary readiness to cooperate with any request from the United Nations Secretary-General, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention and the Relationship Agreement between the UN and the OPCW.

These recent events have highlighted the importance of redoubling our efforts to seek universal adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The European Union calls upon Syria and all other States not Party to ratify or accede to the Convention without delay. We encourage the Technical Secretariat to continue its efforts in this direction in a targeted and tailor-made manner, and reiterate the European Union’s readiness to actively contribute to the achievement of this common objective.

The European Union has tangibly demonstrated its commitment to the implementation of all the provisions of the Convention *inter alia* through its successive voluntary financial

contributions in support of OPCW activities, totalling approximately €9.5 million since 2004. A significant proportion of these contributions has been dedicated to the OPCW Africa Programme, which exemplifies the importance the European Union attaches to it. Around 30% of the latest financial contribution of the European Union, now in the phase of implementation, is committed to addressing the particular needs of the African States Parties, in various areas of the Convention including national implementation, assistance and protection, and international cooperation.

Focusing in particular on items on the agenda of this Executive Council, the European Union underlines the importance of the full national implementation of the Convention and urges all States Parties to put in place and enforce all the necessary legislative and administrative measures in accordance with Article VII. We remain concerned about the relatively high number of States Parties that have yet to do so. The European Union welcomes the Technical Secretariat's efforts to explore new ways of enhancing national implementation and stands ready to assist in this process.

The European Union also stands ready to discuss concrete proposals put forward under Article XI, in accordance with the decision on the components of an agreed framework for the full implementation of Article XI taken by the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of States Parties. The full implementation of both Article VII and XI contributes to, amongst other things, enhancing chemical safety and security and promotes the overall prohibition on chemical weapons.

The methodology of work of the Executive Council has important implications for its efficiency and effectiveness. The European Union therefore welcomes the recent consultations on the subject convened by you, Madam Chairperson. In considering this matter, we believe that we should keep an open mind and explore various available options, including considering the appropriate number of Executive Council sessions we hold each year as well as their duration. These should reflect the real needs and volume of substantive work of the Council. With reference in particular to 2013, we recall that in 2008 when the Second Review Conference was held the number of sessions was reduced. We are confident that the Council can be at least as efficient with its time in 2013. The efficiency and effectiveness of the Council also depends on the good preparation of its sessions and in this respect there is scope for improvement, for example by circulating Council papers in good time to enable proper consideration. Report drafting and procedural issues should not take up a disproportionately large part of the Council's time at the expense of discussion on substantive issues.

In relation to the OPCW Programme and Budget for 2013, we wish to firstly express our appreciation to the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat for exhibiting a receptive attitude to States Parties' concerns and presenting a revised draft, featuring an overall reduction in nominal terms compared to last year's programme and budget, including the cost for the Third Review Conference. Whilst discussions among States Parties on this draft are ongoing, the current economic and financial situation, and the consequent need to pursue efficiencies and cost-saving measures, should be borne in mind.

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