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**STATEMENT BY H.E. MARY WHELAN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRELAND TO THE OPCW
ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
AT THE SEVENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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^{*}, Iceland⁺, Serbia^{*}, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Andorra, Georgia, Monaco, San Marino, and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

Madame Chairperson, we would like to welcome you back to the Chair. We look forward to working with you over the coming days in an effective and efficient manner. We know that we can count on you to keep us focussed on our work.

Preparations for the Third Review Conference have dominated our activities at the OPCW since the Seventeenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties which met last November. This reflects the importance of the Review Conference which provides us with the opportunity to review how the Convention has operated over the past five years and also provides a welcome opportunity to see how we can improve our implementation of the Convention in the coming period. Much has changed since the Convention came into operation. These changes include the ever increasing pace of change in science and technology, the growing importance of the chemical industry in many countries and the reality of the risks posed by non-State actors.

Over the past five years there have been many positive developments and these should be acknowledged by the Review Conference. The policy-making organs of the OPCW, including the Executive Council, have shown their capacity to deal with difficult issues and reach effective decisions. The Review Conference should acknowledge this.

In a sense, preparations for the upcoming Conference began in April 2011 when the report of the Advisory Panel on the Future Priorities of the Organisation was issued. This report, which drew attention to changes in the external environment since the Convention entered

* 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.



into force, helped us to focus on the implications for the Convention regime of what it referred to as new opportunities and risks. The report stimulated a vigorous period of reflection and challenged us to adapt the programmes and priorities of our Organisation 'by design and not by default.' The success of the Review Conference will be measured by the extent to which it rises to this challenge.

The first phase of the work of the OEWG enabled all States Parties, in a systematic way, to consider the operation of the Convention—where it has been successful and where States Parties need to improve, nationally and collectively, how its provisions are implemented. The papers and assistance provided by the Technical Secretariat during this phase have been invaluable. The EU is indebted to the chair of the OEWG, Ambassador Baghli of Algeria, for the manner in which she has guided the work of the OEWG. She has acted throughout with impartiality and has ensured a very transparent process. Charged with the task of producing a draft outcome document acceptable to all as a basis for future work, she met the challenge set for her.

The second phase of the work of the OEWG which commenced in January is more difficult as we attempt to ensure that the outcome documents remain forward looking and pragmatic. The OPCW has the great advantage of having the unambiguous and active support of all its States Parties. Differences, where they exist, are differences of emphasis rather than of priority.

A particular challenge is achieving the goal of universality. The Convention is unfinished business while even one State remains outside its obligations. Syria's possession of chemical weapons and the continuing conflict in the region have highlighted the fact that despite the progress made since the Convention entered into force, the threat of the possible use of chemical weapons persists. The OPCW, as an Organisation, must be ready to respond to any developments in the region and be prepared to meet any request for assistance from the UN Secretary-General in the event that chemical weapons are used. The EU again urges the Syrian authorities to take the necessary measures to keep these weapons secure and to arrange for their independently verified destruction as soon as possible.

The working methods of the Executive Council have been a source of frustration for many States Parties even as its effectiveness in taking decisions is to be commended. The Executive Council is an unusual body in that it performs its tasks effectively but not very efficiently. We welcome the efforts which you are making to ensure that we look in an open and even-handed manner at how we can do things better. Amongst the issues which the EU would like to see addressed is the possibility to have shorter, more focussed meetings of the Executive Council. The situation where we spend more time writing our report than discussing substantive issues needs to be addressed with a degree of urgency. We believe that the will exists to address these issues.

To conclude, the EU looks forward to working closely with you during this session of the Executive Council. I request that this document be treated as an official document of this session of the Council.