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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ROBERT P. MIKULAK UNITED STATES DELEGATION AT THE SEVENTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL REGARDING THE USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS IN SYRIA

Mr Chairman,

My delegation appreciates the information that the Director-General has just provided with regards to the United Nations investigation of alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria. We welcome the OPCW's close cooperation with the UN and fully support the efforts of the UN Secretary-General to ascertain the facts. As indicated earlier today in the debate that the Council had on its agenda, we continue to believe that the issue of the use of chemical weapons in Syria warrants a separate agenda item on the agenda of this session of the Council. We will continue to press to include this issue on the agenda at this session of the Council and at future sessions as long as the issue of use remains a current concern.

States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention should continue to condemn any use of chemical weapons in Syria and also call on all parties to the conflict to allow unfettered access to the UN investigating team to conduct on-site investigations to help reveal the truth about chemical weapons use in Syria. By allowing unfettered access, the Assad regime could prove that its request for a UN investigation was not just a diversionary tactic. Until that occurs, States Parties should continue to make their voices heard on behalf of everyone affected by the use of chemical weapons in Syria. On 14 June, the United States provided a letter to UN Secretary-General Ban, calling the UN's attention to our updated intelligence assessment and specific incidents of alleged chemical weapons use. We also requested that the UN mission include these incidents in its ongoing investigation and report, as appropriate, on its findings.

The fact that the use of chemical weapons in Syria is not an issue on the agenda of this Executive Council session, despite the grave concerns previously expressed by both the Executive Council and the Third Review Conference, reflects very poorly on both the Executive Council and the OPCW as a whole. This is the Organisation that was established by States that were determined to prevent any further use of chemical weapons. We should be discussing the reports of chemical weapons use. The future relevance and credibility of the OPCW and the Chemical Weapons Convention are at risk.

Some argue that nothing new has happened since the Council discussed the use of chemical weapons in Syria in late March. This argument does not reflect reality. In mid-April, the



Third Review Conference emphasised its deep concern that chemical weapons may have been used in Syria. And since then four countries - the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Russia - have each stated publicly their conclusion that use of nerve agents has taken place. Each country has based its conclusion in part on analysis of samples. Surely, the statement by the Review Conference and the public statements by major countries, who are also States Parties to the Convention, qualify as important developments.

Some may say that so-called “political issues” should be left to the UN Security Council and that the policy-making organs of the OPCW, such as the Executive Council, are only mandated to deal with technical issues. Some may argue that events on the territory of a non-State Party are not the business of the Council. We fundamentally disagree that the Council is restricted solely to technical matters. Any reported use of chemical weapons anywhere is relevant to the object and purpose of the Chemical Weapons Convention and therefore relevant to the work of the policy-making organs of the OPCW.

This Seventy-Third Session of the Executive Council should not be an idle bystander, but instead should echo all of the concerns expressed to date about the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Mr Chairman,

I will have further remarks concerning the use of chemical weapons in Syria in my statement in the general debate. I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Seventy-Third Session of the Council. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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