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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
AT THE SEVENTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Distinguished Mr Chairman,

First of all, allow me, Mr Chairman, to welcome you once again and to express my certainty that under your leadership the Executive Council will reinforce its reputation as one of the leading organs of the OPCW.

Russia continues to fulfil its obligations to destroy its remaining stockpiles of chemical weapons. We are committed to the completion of this process in full compliance with the requirements of the Convention and decisions adopted by the OPCW in this regard, as well as in accordance with the plans we announced in April 2012.

As at 15 July this year, 29,973 tonnes of Category 1 chemical weapons had been destroyed, which is equal to 75% of the initial quantity declared. We will submit detailed information on the progress made in the realisation of the Russian programme under the relevant agenda item.

I should now like to draw your attention to a few matters which, we believe, will enable the Executive Council to fully appreciate the tableau of efforts made by the Russian side to speed up the destruction of its chemical arsenals.

Thus, work has begun in the Russian Federation to destroy so-called munitions of complex construction. For this purpose it was necessary to develop special technological methods and to set up unique process lines for the disassembly and disposal of such munitions. All of these measures are taken with the highest level of security, ensuring the occupational safety of personnel and protection of the environment. Furthermore, despite the increase in the costs of the design, engineering and construction work, which is unavoidable in such conditions, the National Authority has made provision for the necessary additional funding so that the facilities could be brought into operation without delay. The same applies for the facility at Kizner, the last in the Russian programme for the destruction of chemical weapons.

Thus, as before, Russia is ready to confirm that it is implementing a programme for the destruction of its chemical arsenals in accordance with the plan submitted in April 2012.



Mr Chairperson,

It was not the initial intention of this delegation to touch again on the issue of Syria given the fact that the Council has already heard two rounds of extensive deliberations on the subject. Nevertheless, some delegations continue to raise the issue during the general debates, thus we feel obliged to react in turn.

I have to note with regret that some references which one State Party has just made with regard to the passages in the G8 Leaders Communiqué (18 June 2013, Lough Erne, United Kingdom) on the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria appear to be incomplete and to a certain extent provide a distorted impression of the essence of the document.

Therefore, for the sake of clarity, we will not object to this document being circulated to the members of the Council for reference. Meanwhile, let me point out some important elements in the G8 Communiqué that have been omitted in the statement of the aforementioned delegation. First, the call to allow access for the UN investigating team was addressed to “all parties to the conflict”. The second critically important point is that such access is requested “to conduct an objective investigation into reports of use of chemical weapons”. Finally, the Communiqué never demanded “to have those that are responsible for chemical weapons use held accountable”. It rather states that “those who may be found responsible for the use of chemical weapons will be held accountable”. In our view, these variations, though small in form, represent a deviation from the substance of the Communiqué.

In principle, we believe that while referring to any official document in the OPCW deliberations the States Parties should do this in the most accurate and consistent manner. This would prevent unfortunate confusion, ambiguity and even distortion, whether it concerns the G8 Communiqué or the case of incomplete quotation from the Preamble to the Convention in the well-known memorandum of the five States Parties.

With regard to implementing the agreements and recommendations that were made at the Third Review Conference in April this year, it is necessary to note the importance of ensuring the comprehensive nature of this process and the inadmissibility of unfounded selectiveness in said process. The only and, in fact, universal source of these agreements is, of course, the report of the Review Conference. The matrix document drawn up by the Technical Secretariat may be useful in assisting our joint work on the understanding that it is no substitute for the provisions of the report of the Review Conference. In this regard, we should like to call upon delegations to exchange their views on the advisability of establishing an open-ended working group for these purposes.

Before this session of the Executive Council, the Director-General, Mr A. Üzümcü, submitted the draft Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2014. This document will certainly be studied in detail on our part, and will be the subject of substantive discussion during the consultations which are to begin shortly at the OPCW. For now we should like to note the following. As you know, in recent times, in light of the financial crisis, which has affected the world economy, discussions on the budget have focused mainly on the extent to which it might be cut. Nevertheless, while we understand the concerns expressed by many delegations in this regard, we should like to see the following criteria as the basis for the preparation of the budget—sufficient funds at the Organisation’s disposal for the implementation of key programmes and for the achievement of the fundamental goals of the Convention. The budget must be optimised and, where it is possible and justified, cut,

without negatively affecting the ability of the OPCW to fulfil its mandate fully and efficiently.

The Russian Federation always attaches great importance to the comprehensive and universal implementation of the Convention at a national level. We welcome the continuing cooperation between the States Parties and the Technical Secretariat to ensure early achievement of these goals. At the same time, today, when the Organisation has crossed the threshold of 15 years of work, is the right time, in our opinion, to think about enhancing the efforts that have already been made. Not everything in the process of national implementation provides grounds for optimism.

The Russian side supports the development of an improved and more pragmatic approach to work in this area. We should like to express our appreciation to the Technical Secretariat in this regard for the proposals it has prepared in relation to the prospects for work towards the implementation of Article VII of the Convention. We are counting on the new facilitator for Article VII, Mr Z. Dimitrov, representative of Bulgaria, to make a significant contribution towards the promotion of this work.

As you know, the Third Review Conference supported the idea that the OPCW remained a global wealth of expert knowledge and experience in the field of implementation of the Convention. Before the Seventy-Third Session of the Executive Council, Director-General A. Üzümcü presented the concept of establishing a corresponding centre which, it is envisaged, will make it possible not only to store the desired information but also to train staff and coordinate the activity of experts and research.

In principle, the idea of setting up such a centre seems sensible and worthy of support. At the same time, there is a number of questions surrounding its establishment: regarding its status as part of the Technical Secretariat once its full-scale operation has begun; to what extent and under what conditions the unique experience and knowledge in the field of chemical demilitarisation which has accumulated within the possessor States will be utilised; and the possibility of a centre in the field of staff training, among others. We trust that fruitful discussions on these issues will be held with the participation of the Technical Secretariat and the other delegations.

Allow me to touch briefly on a certain topic which has animated many on the Executive Council—the methodology of its work.

We believe that increasing the efficiency of the work of the Executive Council should facilitate the intensification of preparatory work within the framework of informal consultations during the intersessional period. Due to the time limitation of its sessions, the Executive Council is simply not in a position to engage in in-depth examination, let alone draw up decisions “from scratch” on complex matters of substance. All this must be done during the intersessional period. The coordinators of informal consultations, the Vice-Chairpersons of the Executive Council, who are responsible for clusters of issues, and, of course, the Chairperson of the Executive Council have a leading role to play in this, the latter’s role being indispensable in the successful preparation and efficient conduct of the meetings of the Executive Council.

In light of discussions which, as we know, have been held recently within the Executive Council with regard to the appointment of coordinators for informal consultations, we should like to note the following.

It is no secret that concerns have recently arisen in connection with the fact that in accordance with the existing procedure it is not possible to fully guarantee that all delegations and regional groups have equal opportunities to put forward candidates for the coordinators' positions. The Council has also found itself to some extent excluded from the process of nominating these persons, and members of the Council, including Member States of the Bureau, have often found out about the recommendation of new facilitators after the fact.

We believe that the process for the selection and appointment of coordinators for informal consultations must be completely transparent, giving all delegations and regional groups the opportunity to participate in it and, at the same time, to take into account the current practice at the OPCW. It would, perhaps, be useful to set down this understanding on paper, and for this reason we should like to ask our distinguished Chairman to draw up such a document, which could be taken into consideration at the next session of the Council and could be used as guidance in the future.

Thus, a mechanism which is consistent and comprehensible to all could be established for the appointment of coordinators for informal consultations, whose work affects the rights and interests of all States Parties.

Mr Chairman,

To conclude, allow me to assure you that you may fully count on the cooperation of the Russian delegation during the work of the Executive Council.

We ask that this statement be distributed as an official document of the Seventy-Third Session of the Executive Council.

Thank you.

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