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**Statement delivered by H.E. Liisa Talonpoika
Permanent Representative of Finland to the OPCW
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Mr. Chairperson,

Finland fully aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union.

I would like to thank the Director-General for his statement. We are looking forward to participating in the deliberations during the coming week.

The OPCW's announcement on June 23rd on the last consignment of chemicals from Syria was a very welcome one. The task at hand has been unprecedented and has shown stalwart determination by the OPCW and UN, as well as by the international community, to work towards destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

Much of the credit goes to the OPCW-UN Joint Mission and their dedicated staff. You have since last autumn tirelessly focused on the verification and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons programme. Finland along with many other nations has worked alongside with you on this exceptional mission. Finnish CBRN-experts participated in the Danish and Norwegian maritime transport task force and a Finnish vessel protection detachment unit participates in the protection of Cape Ray while the chemical materials are being neutralised.

From the point of destruction of chemicals, the work itself has already started. As part of the commercial arrangement between the OPCW and Finnish waste treatment facility, Ekokem, industrial grade chemicals and effluent will be destroyed in Finland. The destruction of industrial grade chemicals began in Riihimäki, Finland on June 22nd, as the Norwegian vessel Taiko, brought the first chemicals for destruction. The destruction task has progressed according to the schedule.

The work in Syria is not completed with the ending of the chemical transports and the beginning of the chemical destruction. We reiterate our deep concern for the allegations of use of toxic chemicals in Syria. We give our full support to the OPCW's Fact Finding Mission. Those guilty for these horrible crimes, must be held responsible. It is essential that the OPCW continues to investigate the chlorine attacks that have occurred in Syria. With regard to the remaining CW production facilities, a solution for their immediate destruction must be found without further delay.

Mr. Chairman,

The verification regime is a fundamental pillar of the Convention and one of its main achievements to date. Verification involves the continuous monitoring of chemicals

weapons stockpile destruction, as well as on-site inspections of commercial chemicals plants to ensure that no production of warfare agents or their precursors occurs. Additional type of inspections are the challenge inspection and investigations of alleged use. Both on-site and off-site verification are crucial in the analysis of the samples. These actions are essential for achieving confidence in compliance with the convention.

Concrete and strong verification regime requires proper tools. The role of the designated laboratories is clearly very important in investigating for example the alleged use. This turned out to be the case in the United Nations Investigation Mission in Syria led by Dr. Sellström. Therefore it is of utmost importance to maintain and support the strong network of designated laboratories i.e. the system of proficiency testing both for environmental and biomedical samples. It is also vital that the OPCW maintains the adequate capacity for current and future tasks and challenges. Finland stresses the importance that the Secretariat maintains verification expertise relating to chemical weapons. Finland is therefore in favour of adoption of decision on "Rehiring of inspectors".

Another fundamental tool, especially for the on-site analysis is the OPCW Central Analytical Database, OCAD. Even though OCAD is essential in on-site inspections it is also the most reliable database for the off-site analysis since the OCAD is by far the widest existing database of chemical warfare agents. Also the data included in the OCAD is of high quality since it only contains data which have been validated by experts of the OPCW Validation Group. The more comprehensive the OCAD is, the more likely it is that the relevant chemicals to the Convention will be identified. We think that the OCAD is one of the key tools in ensuring the continued effectiveness of the verification regime. Its development and expansion with relevant chemicals ought to be of interest to all. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden put out a document in Third Review Conference (RC-3/NAT.39) which lines out some recommendations related to expansion of the OCAD.

Finland followed with interest the discussion on the so-called Incapacitating Chemical Agents at the Third Review Conference. Discussions would be welcome to identify possible measures that could help in increasing transparency on this topic.

In order to keep in track in the incredibly fast developing world of chemistry, the role of the Scientific Advisory Board is getting more and more important. New developments in science and technology should be followed intensively and regularly. For example the convergence in chemistry and biology poses challenges already now and the challenges will most probably increase in the future. Finland recognizes the important status of the SAB within the organization and greatly appreciates its work.

I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session of the Council.