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THE NETHERLANDS

**STATEMENT BY H.E. JAN LUCAS VAN HOORN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NETHERLANDS TO THE OPCW
AT THE SEVENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,

The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement pronounced by the Representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. Further to that statement, I take the opportunity to make the following observations.

My delegation thanks the Director-General for his opening statement and the Technical Secretariat for the briefing on the activities of the Declaration Assessment Team, this morning.

For more than a year now, this Council has been engaged with the situation in Syria. Since September last year, 10 meetings have been held to discuss the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. This is without including the regular EC sessions or the CSP.

As we all know, the Council's decision of 27 September 2013 and Security Council resolution 2118 of that same date established that the Syrian chemical weapons programme had to be completely eliminated in the first half of 2014. The deadline of 30 June passed a little more than a week ago and there is still quite some work to be done.

The removal of the last shipment of priority chemicals for destruction outside Syria on 23 June was a welcome (albeit belated) step. We are grateful to all the countries that have contributed and are continuing to contribute to this part of the dismantlement operation. In the same vein, I reiterate my delegation's respect and appreciation for the work being done by OPCW and UN staff in implementing the mandate of the Joint Mission.

So progress is being made as far as the destruction of chemical weapons materials is concerned. But there is still no progress with regard to the destruction of the 12 chemical weapon production facilities that have to be destroyed in accordance with the Convention. We echo the call on the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic made by many delegations in this room – including my own – on many previous occasions, to show the necessary flexibility and allow this Council to take a decision in this respect in the shortest possible term.



In addition, questions and concerns about Syria's declaration continue to exist. We look forward to the Syrian document with additional information and clarification, announced in the briefing by the Declaration Assessment Team. We expect the Syrian Arab Republic to resolve any remaining unclarity about the declaration.

Mr Chairman,

At the meeting of the Council on 17 June, the Fact-Finding Mission set up by the Director-General to investigate the allegations of renewed use of chemical weapons in Syria presented its preliminary findings. The mission's conclusion that the available information cannot be dismissed and "lends credence to the view that toxic chemicals, most likely pulmonary irritating agents such as chlorine, have been used in a systematic manner in a number of attacks" is shocking indeed. It shows that elements in Syria are still prepared to use chemical weapons, despite the international outcry and despite the fact that this is in blatant violation of international law. My delegation fully supports the Director-General's decision to continue the investigation. We emphasise that all those responsible for these and earlier cases of the use of chemical weapons must be held to account for their deeds.

In closing, I request that this statement be issued as an official document of this Seventy-Sixth Session of the Executive Council.

Thank you.

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