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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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

Distinguished Chairman,

Since this is your first regular session of the Executive Council, we should like to start our statement by wishing you every success in your responsible post. At the same time, as we all well know, you already have on your ‘score card’ the conduct of two fruitful meetings of the Council; that is solid experience, which, we are sure, will allow you henceforth to head the most important governing body of the OPCW both confidently and effectively.

At this regular session of the Council, we have to consider a number of matters of crucial significance to the Organisation’s activity; in our view, the most important of these relate to implementing the decisions of the Conference of the States Parties and the Executive Council on the destruction of chemical weapons in the possessor States.

We shall, needless to say, have the opportunity of hearing the reports of the Director-General on this issue, as well as information from the possessor States on the progress they have achieved towards fulfilling this most important Convention obligation.

The Russian Federation, as a chemical weapons possessor State, is fully and unconditionally committed to its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, and is, in full accordance with the decision of the Sixteenth Conference of the States Parties to the Convention, undertaking all essential measures to complete the destruction of its remaining chemical weapons ‘in the shortest possible time’.

With the commissioning in 2013 of the last – the fifth (of those now operating) – chemical weapons destruction facility at Kizner, the Russian Federation has now ensured a steady, continuous process of chemical weapons destruction. Since the last session of the Council, we have destroyed 1,317 tonnes of Category 1 chemical weapons. Overall, until now, Russia has destroyed 32,499 tonnes of Category 1 chemical weapons, or 81.3% of the quantity originally declared.

The participants in the visit to the Russian Federation conducted from 14 - 18 April this year by representatives of the Executive Council and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW were able to acquaint themselves with the real picture of the success we have achieved in the matter of chemical demilitarisation, and also of the difficulties that have arisen along the way and the measures being undertaken to overcome them. During that visit, a number of meetings were held with the Russian officials responsible for the chemical weapons



destruction programme, and a visit was arranged to the chemical weapons destruction facility at Kizner. We trust that delegations have been able to study the report on this visit, to familiarise themselves with its conclusions, and to understand better the chemical weapons destruction situation in Russia.

The Russian side was, at earlier sessions of the Council, already advising on the nature of the problems that were affecting the national chemical weapons destruction programme, and was describing the objective nature thereof and the complexity of reporting on all the factors linked to this: technical, organisational, administrative and financial. At this session as well, the Russian Federation intends to submit the fullest possible information on all the circumstances relating to the implementation of the national chemical weapons destruction programme, including the question of the prospects of its early completion. We will be prepared to elaborate on this topic in detail during the discussion of Item 6 b) on the Agenda of the Seventy-Sixth Session.

The Russian Federation has taken note of the Director-General's comprehensive report on the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, and generally shares the assessments therein contained. Yet we should like to share our own perspective on the situation as well.

First of all, we should like to express our deep satisfaction at the completion on 23 June 2014 of the removal from the Syrian Arab Republic of all the declared stockpiles of chemical weapons precursors and components, and also at the destruction on Syrian territory of individual chemical weapons components, and all munitions and specialised equipment.

The Syrian Arab Republic has, in this way, fully met the requirements of paragraph 1 c) of the Council's decision of the 27 September 2013, and of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). We are convinced that this, the most important achievement of the entire Syrian operation, must be properly reflected in the final report of the Seventy-Sixth Session.

It is not extraneous to recall that such an outstanding result has been achieved only after nine months of intense work and the selfless efforts of many, many people, international organisations and governments.

We welcome in this connection the activity of the management of the Secretariat, which organised this international operation, unprecedented in scale and complexity, and with gratitude we highlight the selfless work of the staff of the OPCW in Syria, who are honestly and bravely fulfilling their duty. We give due recognition to the work of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission, especially that of its Special Coordinator, Ms Sigrid Kaag, whose contribution to the operation would be difficult to overestimate.

There can be no doubt that the most important factor in the success of the operation was the full cooperation of the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW and the Joint Mission. The Government of that country, despite a most complicated domestic political situation, implemented unprecedented transparency measures, provided the highest level of security for the Joint Mission's staff, and took all essential measures for the safe, rapid removal of chemical weapons and the destruction of the separate components and equipment thereof. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic is continuing to cooperate effectively and responsibly with the OPCW and the United Nations to resolve all matters that still remain

to be dealt with. As we know, that cooperation by the Syrian Arab Republic was given its due credit by the management both of the Secretariat of the OPCW, and of the United Nations.

The Syrian operation also became an outstanding example of effective and coordinated cooperation by the international community. Many States Parties made their contributions to the logistical and financial support of the operation, placing at the disposition of the Syrian Arab Republic, the OPCW and the United Nations both means of transport and military vessels. In a word, they assisted in every possible way to ensure that the chemical demilitarisation of the Syrian Arab Republic became a reality. This fact also deserves due credit from the Seventy-Sixth Session of the Executive Council.

We well understand that the task of the chemical demilitarisation of the Syrian Arab Republic has not yet been carried out completely; in particular, work is still continuing on the problem of destroying the 12 Syrian former chemical weapons production facilities. Apparently, it will take some time yet to find a solution which meets the requirements of the Convention, follows the practice which has developed in the OPCW over the last 15 years, and does not prejudice the objects and purposes of chemical disarmament on non-proliferation.

At the same time, we should like to stress once more that the main purpose of the Syrian operation has been achieved: the chemical warfare potential in the Syrian Arab Republic no longer exists, and the elements that still have to be eliminated cannot be regarded as presenting a threat from the point of view of chemical disarmament and non-proliferation. To take the former production facilities as an example: as we know, they have already been stripped of all special structural features and specialised equipment, which excludes completely the possibility of their being used for purposes prohibited by the Convention. We believe that these factors must be borne fully in mind when we are discussing the extent to which the goals of the Syrian operation have been achieved.

Like most delegations, we are seriously concerned by the situation regarding the OPCW Mission to establish the facts surrounding the possible use of chemical weapons. We suppose that the Members of this Council are well informed, *inter alia* from the Mission's reports, about how openly and effectively the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic cooperated with the Mission, and about the assistance and support they gave to OPCW staff, to ensure a full, unbiased examination of all the circumstances linked to the allegations of the use of chlorine, which was done to create safe conditions for the work of the Mission. We feel, therefore, that it is essential to examine thoroughly the circumstances of the incident of 27 May, as a result of which not only was the work of the Mission stymied, but the lives of its members were placed at risk as well. We should also analyse carefully the prospects and methods of the future work of the Mission, devoting attention most of all to the interests of the staff's personal safety, and to the degree of reliability of the information which formed the basis for setting the Mission up.

We are following carefully the work of the OPCW's mission to update the initial declarations made by the Syrian Arab Republic when it joined the Convention. We share the conviction that the activity of this mission must serve to strengthen trust towards the Syrian Arab Republic as an honest, responsible party to the Convention. We welcome the fact that the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic are demonstrating due openness, and are cooperating closely with the mission in clarifying all aspects of their chemical programme. We also expect the recently concluded third visit of experts from the Secretariat to Damascus to lead,

at last, to the satisfaction of the concerns of a number of delegations as to the completeness or accuracy of the Syrian declarations submitted to the OPCW.

The draft budget for 2015 is not formally on the agenda; nevertheless, as it was presented by the Director-General on the eve of the Executive Council, we should like briefly to stress the following points. We welcome the efforts of the Secretariat to proceed on the basis of a minimal level of expenditure, when setting its budgetary requirements, as this will allow a maximally effective use of the resources made available to the Organisation by the States Parties. We are, therefore, pleased to note also that the draft budget for 2015 envisages a return to the parameters that existed before the Organisation's expenditure was increased in 2014 because of the requirements of the operation in the Syrian Arab Republic. We imagine that this factor will encourage constructive consultations on the draft budget and lead to its early adoption.

The Russian Federation welcomes the fact that work is continuing on the implementation of Article VII of the Convention. There is no doubt that without the requisite implementation in all States Parties of the requirements, restrictions and prohibitions in the Convention, the latter's regime, which is designed to remove forever the threat of use of chemical weapons, will, unfortunately, remain vulnerable.

The Russian Federation consistently advocates that full, early national implementation of the Convention be one of the priorities in the OPCW. We therefore support any efforts by the Secretariat and the States Parties that are directed at achieving tangible improvements in this area. We believe that the search for alternative, innovative approaches to the problem of implementing the Convention might contribute to future progress with this matter, and we hope that such progress – after a noticeable lull in recent years – will not be long in coming.

We also call upon the members of the Council to conduct within the framework of this – thematic – session a serious conversation on what is hampering the full, early implementation of Article VII, and what steps must be taken to assist the process of national implementation in those States that are experiencing difficulties with it.

We should be obliged if this Statement could be circulated as an official document of the Seventy-Sixth Session of the Executive Council.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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