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MALAYSIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR DR FAUZIAH MOHAMAD TAIB
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA TO THE OPCW AT THE
SEVENTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman, Mr Director-General, distinguished delegates,

One hundred years ago, in a little Flemish town of Ieper, some 5,700 canisters amounting to 168 tons of chlorine gas were released at sunrise against Allied troops - marking the first ever use of chemical weapons that caused the death of more than half a million people. The First World War was also occasionally referred to as the Chemists' War – symbolically marking the first large-scale abuse of the knowledge of chemistry. If that was not enough, the production and the use of chemical weapons continued even after World War I. In our recent memory, 20,000 Iranian troops were killed, with 80,000 others injured during the Iran-Iraq war in which much more deadly nerve agents were used against soldiers and innocent people.

Next month, on 21 April 2015 we will gather in Ieper, Belgium to remember the event – of an act that shamed us all - an act that we as States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention have promised never to witness again. Yet, we are all aware that today some 15 per cent of all declared chemical weapons are still not destroyed. Many justifications have been given – some legal, some economic, and some environmental – so much so that it will be a decade yet before we hear of their total destruction. Some States not Party to the Convention are also reported to have chemical weapons stockpiles. Because of all these, the OPCW will still need to stand tall even though many of us in this Ieper Room may not be around to witness that important day.

Additionally, States Parties need to strive for the universality of the Convention. We need to ensure compliance not just over big issues such as the destruction of existing stockpiles (Article IV), but also lesser issues such as putting in place the required legislation (Article VII), and ensuring proper declaration of plant sites and facilities (Article III).

My delegation is pleased to hear that after three years running, the improved A15 Site Selection Methodology of the OCPFs has proven to work. I recall when the co-facilitators took on the task of finding an acceptable, improved methodology that would target better plant sites and greater regional distribution, both co-facilitators were unaware of the complexity of the issue. Today, after four years, even that memory of the endless meetings, suggestions and arguments is fading. Ambassador Pieter Lohman of the Dutch Permanent Representation who was one of the facilitators has since retired. In a few days, all these will be academic to me too. But many in this room who are new to the OPCW might not be able to grasp its history, the detailed description of the modified methodology, and how it came



about as it is applied today. It would be valuable, Mr Chairman, if the Technical Secretariat, in particular, the Verification Unit, could conduct a special briefing on the existing methodology to the new diplomats in town so that the matter continues to be understood.

Let me now touch on a subject that is of interest to many scientists and chemists and therefore should be of interest to diplomats as well. I am referring to the many calls made by the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) to review the Schedule Lists of the Chemical Weapons Convention as well as to take stock of the innovations in the chemical industry in which new processes, equipment and production locations pose a challenge to the Convention.

At all the three Review Conferences, the SAB has never failed to offer insights to the rapid discovery of new chemical compounds leading to the growing convergence between chemistry and biology. The developments in the field of nanotechnology and synthetic biology are worrying signs that the possibility of manipulating living systems with chemistry could be exploited for biochemical warfare. There would then be an overlap between the functions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the BWC and as it now stands, neither Convention can address the issue. It is about time that States Parties take heed of the warnings of the SAB. Just because we might not like Edison does not mean that we don't want electricity in our home.

Since the entry into force of the Convention, the advances in science and technology has dramatically changed the way chemicals are produced. The widespread use of multipurpose production equipment, the trend towards the creation of 'world plants' which can produce and supply a given chemical to anywhere in the world, the existence of chemical industrial parks – all these constitute a challenge to the industry verification regime as we understand it today. These trends will make the Convention's definition of 'plant sites' irrelevant and would make the monitoring of chemical use and its production more problematic.

Lastly, Mr Chairman, Malaysia's National Authority will continue to play its part in its task to bring awareness to its citizens and interested parties on the practical aspect of the Convention. The OPCW remains relevant to Malaysia, as we are the largest exporter of chemical products in Southeast Asia and the 14th largest in the world. This year, the National Authority will continue to conduct awareness programmes for its industries and its national inspectors, and will randomly pick at least five industries for inspections as part of its safety and security management activity. In this respect, any assistance from the Technical Secretariat would go a long way in helping Malaysia do its part in meeting the objectives and purpose of the Convention.

With these words, I thank you, Mr Chairman and I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Seventy-Eighth Session of the Executive Council and be published on its public domain.

This may be my last plenary statement at the OPCW but I can assure you that the voice of Malaysia will continue to be heard.