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URUGUAY

**STATEMENT BY DR VERÓNICA CREGO
PERMANENT ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE OF URUGUAY TO THE OPCW AT
THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

This session is the last in which Uruguay will be participating as a member of the Executive Council. As such, my delegation would like to express its gratitude for the leadership of the Director-General and recognise the valuable work performed by the Technical Secretariat over these past two years during which Uruguay has been a part of the crucial decisions taken by this Council that have marked historical moments for this Organisation.

This coming 21 April will commemorate one hundred years since the first large-scale use of chemical weapons in the city of Ieper, Belgium. It has been a long, productive path since then in terms of the prohibition of the use of this type of weapon. Since the Geneva Protocol of 1925, which prohibited the use of chemical and biological weapons, to the principles established in the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, and Stockpiling of Biological Weapons of 1972, until arriving at the only multilateral disarmament treaty that prohibits an entire category of weapons and which provides a solid verification system: the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In this regard, we are pleased that the OPCW is an international disarmament organisation that has grown so quickly. The 190 countries that have ratified the Convention effectively represent 98% of the world's population and 98% of the global chemical industry.

Furthermore, this Organisation has successfully tackled the major challenges that it has recently faced, as it has been able to move the disarmament process forward in a territory dealing with an armed conflict, meeting very tight deadlines. This exceptional work has demonstrated the strong international support that the OPCW benefits from and which has established a new pattern in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It is a doubly important message in the international arena characterised by the worrisome lack of similar progress in the nuclear and bacteriological fields.

Achieving the universality of the treaty is one of the priorities of the Convention. Under the premise that the use of chemical weapons constitutes a reprehensible, impermissible action, there is no justification for not ratifying it. Achieving complete universality will contribute to improved national and international security. That is why we encourage the States that have not yet acceded to or ratified the Convention to do so in order to achieve overall and complete disarmament.



However, the Chemical Weapons Convention does not implement itself. Ratification alone does not suffice for a State Party to fully comply with its fundamental purposes and objectives; it must also ensure that the obligations set out in the Convention are given legal force. In this regard, according to Article VII, each State Party must adopt the legal measures necessary to carry out the obligations under the Convention. This provides for an administrative and legal framework for coherent and transparent compliance with the obligations relating to the implementation of the Convention.

On the other hand, the implementation of Article VII is even more urgent in the face of non-State actors, reaffirming the obligation of the States to prohibit private persons within their jurisdiction to carry out any activity prohibited by the Convention.

In terms of assistance and protection, we support the strategy to develop activities to create abilities and standardised training at a regional level in order to have the ability to respond to chemical incidents more effectively and efficiently. On the other hand, the activity of this Organisation pertaining to international cooperation is of the utmost interest of the States Parties that, like Uruguay, do not possess either chemical weapons or an industry relevant to the objective and purpose of the Convention. It is for this reason that we reiterate the importance of reinforcing the Convention's pillar of international cooperation in order to promote the peaceful use of chemistry and support economic and technological development of countries in this field.

The use of chemical weapons contradicts the norms of international law and particularly the Chemical Weapons Convention, just as this Council stated this past February. For this reason, the delegation of Uruguay supports the continued work of the Fact-Finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic to clarify information about the attacks perpetrated on its territory over the past year. At the same time, it keenly awaits the complete destruction of the chemical weapons production facilities, as well as the evolution of the consultations between the Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Government concerning the declaration submitted to adhere to the Convention.

The OPCW's achievements in preserving a culture of cooperation and the search for a consensus in order to carry out issues relating to peace and security—more specifically the issues relating to disarmament and non-proliferation—should continued to be upheld at this session of the Executive Council. In this, you may count on Uruguay's commitment.

We would be most grateful, Mr Chairperson, if this statement would please be considered an official document of this session.

Thank you.