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**RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

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

Mr Chairperson,

The delegation of the Russian Federation is again pleased to welcome you as the Chairperson of the Executive Council and would like to assure you of our full support and readiness for constructive cooperation to ensure that this session is as successful as possible.

As per the decision of the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, the Russian Federation is taking all necessary measures to ensure the destruction of remaining chemical weapons in the shortest time possible.

Since the Council's Seventy-Seventh Session, over 1,000 tonnes of Category 1 chemical weapons have been destroyed. In total to date, Russia has destroyed 34,514 tonnes of Category 1 chemical weapons, or 86.4% of the initially declared amount (as at 15 March 2015).

We are prepared to deliberate in detail on the status of the destruction of the remaining stockpiles of chemical weapons in the Russian Federation as part of the discussion of the relevant agenda item during this session, including the prospects for the earliest possible completion of this process, problems that are arising in this regard, and the technical, organisational, administrative, and financial measures taken to overcome them.

The Russian Federation has taken note of the latest reports by the Director-General and the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. We would also like to express our gratitude for the new information presented today by the Director-General on this matter. We are happy to note that the Director-General's reports once again—as before—reflect the due degree of cooperation by the Syrian authorities with the OPCW's Technical Secretariat. We also note with satisfaction the considerable progress in the destruction of 12 former chemical weapons production facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic. We would like to emphasise that the representatives of the Secretariat working on this matter have consistently assessed their interaction with the Syrian Arab Republic as "excellent". We hope that the efforts of the Syrian Government, as well as assistance and support from the Secretariat, will facilitate the completion of the destruction of chemical weapons facilities in the near future.



In this regard, we cannot agree with the assertions of a number of delegations that the Syrian Arab Republic is responsible for delays in the destruction of the 12 facilities. Everyone knows perfectly well whose fault it is that the conclusion of contracts for the destruction of the facilities dragged on for nearly three months, and who delayed the transfer of financial resources and equipment supplies. We won't name names, but it was not the Syrian Government, just as it was not the Secretariat.

We note the expansive work that has been done by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) on the initial declarations of the Syrian Arab Republic in line with Article III of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We have noted the wording of the recently released third report of the Mission, according to which an enormous amount of additional information was received from the Syrian Arab Republic. At the same time, we would like to reiterate that the Mission's main task is to strengthen trust in the Syrian Arab Republic as a conscientious and responsible party to the Convention. That is why calls for Damascus to clarify various pieces of information on its chemical programme should not reach beyond the requirements set out in the Convention.

We would like to express hope that the Mission will soon be able to clarify all problematic issues, especially since the Syrian Arab Republic continues to demonstrate an adequate level of cooperation and is striving to bring its initial declaration into line with the requirements of the Convention as quickly as possible.

On 4 February, the Council took a decision on "Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria". We all know the effort it took to develop, agree upon, and adopt this decision. That is why we hope that all of the members of the Council are interested in ensuring that the Mission's work moves along smoothly, efficiently, and in line with the agreements between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Secretariat, which as far as we know, are currently holding consultations on clarifying the Mission's mandate, a time frame, and specific procedures for its activities.

In this regard, we note the information presented by the Director-General on the prospects for the Mission's activities and several of its most important parameters. We presume that it will facilitate a constructive discussion on this issue, as provided for in the Council's decision of 4 February.

Unfortunately, a number of chemical weapons-related incidents have recently taken place in Iraq: a shooting by unknown parties of the al-Multhanna chemical weapons storage facility, as well as the terrorist attack of the "Islamic State" in the Kurdish autonomous region of Iraq. Moreover, as far as the latter is concerned, we also noted that according to the reports of local authorities, the use of chlorine was established via an analysis conducted in a laboratory of one of the European Union states.

In this regard, we have noted the Director-General's statement that this situation is already being addressed by the OPCW and Iraq, and we expect that representatives of Iraq will also inform the Council, just as they previously did concerning chlorine-related incidents that took place in late 2014.

We are also confident that the increasingly frequent use of chemicals by terrorist groups based in the Middle East only confirms the need to coordinate the efforts of all of the

members of the global community to focus on consistent counteraction of terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations.

We note with satisfaction the renewal of the consultations process on matters of national implementation, as we see this subject as one of the Organisation's most important areas of work. The situation that has developed in this area gives rise to even more concern, since for more than ten years, the Plan of Action Regarding the Implementation of Article VII Obligations has seen only modest achievements in national implementation, falling short of the objectives and tasks of the Convention.

We urge both the delegations and the Secretariat to revitalise the discussion on this matter, in order to find real paths and opportunities to accelerate the national implementation process, thus boosting the overall effectiveness of the Convention and the legal force of its provisions.

In this regard, we believe that under the new coordinator, Mr Sébastien Braha, the consultation process under Article VII will achieve the needed level of dynamics and effectiveness.

The Russian delegation has shown great interest in the issues addressed at yesterday's meeting of the open-ended working group, particularly in the discussion of the legal aspects of holding responsible non-State actors that have used chemical weapons. We believe this area is important, especially in light of the situation in the Middle East, where such incidents, unfortunately, continue to take place. In this regard, we support the idea voiced by the Director-General, to more deliberately develop said legal aspects, possibly in a format separate from the working group, with the involvement of experts from the capitals.

The Russian Federation would like to support the observations made by the delegation of China regarding the improvement of OPCW policies on and practices in multilingualism. This is fundamentally critical, not only from the point of view of the full involvement of the States Parties and their National Authorities in the Organisation's work, but also in terms of the accessibility of experience and knowledge accumulated by the OPCW for all strata of the population in all countries of the world.

Mr Chairperson,

This Council session is your last regular session as Council Chairperson. We would like to take advantage of our time on the floor to express to you our sincere gratitude for the efforts that you have made in overseeing the Council's successful work, and the resolution of many complex agenda items. We are deeply grateful to you for this, we value your tact, finesse, and skill at finding a way forward even with the most challenging problems.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

We request that this statement be issued as an official document of the Seventy-Eighth Session of the Executive Council.