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ARGENTINA

**STATEMENT BY MINISTER NICOLÁS VIDAL
ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC TO THE OPCW
AT THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

It is a privilege to once again have your professional experience in overseeing this new session of the Executive Council. I reiterate the full willingness of my delegation to collaborate on your work.

I would like to voice my gratitude to Director-General Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü for the complete and exhaustive report that he has offered on the status of the Organisation. We also appreciate the statements of the Vice-Presidents and facilitators.

This session's full agenda includes the reports on the various electronic tools created by the Technical Secretariat and which are made available to the States Parties to submit their declarations. These include the Verification Information System (VIS), the Electronic Declaration Tool for National Authorities (EDNA), and the Secure Information Exchange System (SIX). We would like to emphasise our satisfaction with the development of these tools and encourage the Secretariat to continue updating these electronic tools, as they facilitate the work of our National Authorities in meeting the obligations set out in the Chemical Weapons Convention.

During this session, we will also discuss the various reports issued by the Technical Secretariat on the activities continuing in the Syrian Arab Republic.

In this respect, we have noted that the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic has reached another important step in its mandate. According to the information presented by the Director-General in his report, the first three chemical weapons production facilities have already been destroyed, and steps are already under way to destroy the remaining nine. The time that we—the States Parties and the Technical Secretariat—have dedicated to discussing and agreeing upon the destruction process for said facilities is now bearing fruit. We are confident that the destruction process for all of the facilities will be completed by the set deadlines.

On the other hand, and according to the most recent report by the Technical Secretariat on the future activities of the Fact-Finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, should the situation



allow, a group of OPCW experts will visit Syria to address the allegations of the likely use of chemical weapons in certain cities.

In this regard, we reiterate our condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstances, as well as our support for investigating all of the allegations that merit investigation. We are confident that the experience accumulated by the Secretariat, bearing in mind as well the way in which the decision was adopted at the Forty-Eighth Meeting of the Executive Council, will allow us to move forward in a decisive manner, with a consensus, toward the eventual continuation of the Fact-Finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. We thank the Technical Secretariat for keeping the Council informed of the development of the Mission's future activities.

These facts demonstrate the need to keep the Technical Secretariat's resources updated in order to carry out these types of missions, particularly under complex circumstances.

At the same time, they remind us that as we approach the final stages of the destruction of declared stockpiles, discussions of the future role of the Organisation become ever more urgent. We would like to emphasise our satisfaction with the Secretariat's document, entitled "The OPCW in 2025: Ensuring a World Free of Chemical Weapons" (S/1252/2015, dated 6 March 2015). After a preliminary review, we believe that this is a solid base for continuing our discussions on this matter. In light of the importance of this exercise, we call upon the Secretariat to convene meetings as necessary to discuss in detail the meaningful proposals contained in this document with an aim to ensure an inclusive and constructive process.

As the document clearly sets out, the focus of the Organisation will progressively shift from disarmament of chemical weapons to preventing their re-emergence. Within this context, education on developing a culture of responsible use of chemistry, as well as outreach on the obligations and responsibilities set out in the Chemical Weapons Convention, constitute one of the key preventative activities that the Organisation should broaden and expand.

For now, we will limit ourselves to these preliminary comments which we will elaborate upon once we reach the appropriate agenda item. In that instance, we will refer to the actions that the Technical Secretariat is developing on the subject and the recommendations proposed in the report by the Scientific Advisory Board's Temporary Working Group on Education and Outreach.

In line with the above, we should take advantage of the upcoming Commemoration in Ieper to renew our commitment to achieving a world absolutely free of weapons of mass destruction, particularly chemical weapons. We must make the most of the opportunity via the political declaration that we will adopt and include a strong message on the importance of the Organisation for the future, while highlighting its ability to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

Finally, we would like to reiterate our appreciation for the Technical Secretariat for its constant support of our country in developing various courses and meetings that we organised together. Among other things, we should mention the advanced regional courses on assistance and protection in responding to chemical emergencies, the training courses on the transfer regime for customs authorities, the future course on security and protection of laboratory chemicals, and meetings on education and outreach on the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In this respect, I reiterate the permanent commitment and willingness of the Argentine Republic in support of these and other training activities as part of the international cooperation driven by the OPCW.

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session.

Thank you.

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