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IRAQ

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

Mr Chairperson,
Excellency the Director-General of the OPCW,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I should like to welcome you, Excellency Ambassador Álvaro Marcelo Moerzinger, to the chair of this session of the Council. We are fully confident that your experience and wisdom will contribute to a successful outcome of this session. We assure you once again of the support of my country's delegation in order to reach positive and fruitful results. I also welcome the Director-General of the OPCW, H.E. Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, and his Deputy, H.E. Ambassador Grace Asirwatham.

My country's delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Alireza Jahangiri, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

I thank the Director-General for his comprehensive statement to the Council, as well as the Vice-Chairpersons and facilitators for their reports on their respective activities during the past period.

Likewise, I should like to welcome the new members and express my hope that we will be able to work hand in hand to cement the foundations of the Convention, uphold its provisions and support its lofty objectives, thereby serving the interests of our nations and countries.

Further, I should like to thank H.E. Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü for the words he has addressed to the families of Halabja's victims on the occasion of the twenty-seventh anniversary of the massacre of thousands of our people in Kurdistan as a result of the use of chemical weapons by the former regime against unarmed civilians on 16 March 1988. The Halabja tragedy confirms the need to continue working for the elimination of all chemical weapons and for achieving the universality of the Convention. I extend my condolences and sympathy to the victims' families. We promise them that we shall persevere in our efforts to prevent such a tragedy from ever occurring again anywhere in the world.

Recent reports, by news agencies and what the Director-General has mentioned in his statement concerning the use of chlorine gas by ISIS groups in various regions in Iraq, are a source of concern for all. As soon as we heard the news, we contacted the relevant official



authorities to obtain further details. We are still awaiting a response to this respect. We will definitely inform Council members of their response upon receipt which, hopefully, will be some time soon during this session of the Council.

I take this opportunity to point out that these criminal groups will not recoil from using any means to kill and destroy. Therefore, their use of chlorine against civilian and military targets alike does not come as a surprise. The barbaric and horrific slaying of people, the destruction of landmarks of our civilisation and history, and the razing of centuries-old churches and mosques are no less abhorrent than the use of chlorine gas. Iraq has been the target of attacks by barbarian groups acting with utter disregard to religion and to human values and targeting Iraq's past, present and future. From this forum, I call upon all peace-loving nations to join the international coalition against terror and support Iraq in its war against ISIS and those behind it, in order to spare the region and the world its evil deeds.

As part of the implementation of the provisions of Article IX of the Iraqi Constitution, and Iraq's obligations under Article IV, paragraph 8, of the Chemical Weapons Convention, Iraqi authorities have developed a destruction plan for the remnants of the former regime's chemical programme, after the destruction operations conducted by UNSCOM during the period from 1991 to 1994. These remnants include contaminated and obsolete instruments and equipment, stored in two extremely fortified bunkers, 13 and 41, at the Al-Muthanna site, north of Bagdad, given the high risk they pose and the absence, at the time, of a suitable destruction technology.

In cooperation with friendly States, an entire complex has been built for the implementation of the destruction plan at the bunkers' site, including laboratories, accommodation, guardhouses and other facilities necessary for the destruction operation. The detailed destruction plan has been submitted to the Technical Secretariat and its implementation was expected to commence by the end of 2014. That, however, was not possible, due to the terrorist attack by ISIS groups, which have plagued many regions in Iraq, including the Al-Muthanna bunkers' area.

On 11 June 2014, surveillance cameras showed that terrorists have occupied the site and started to loot and take away the destruction facility equipment. Security officials have been monitoring their movements prior to their attacks in the region. Based on that information, the relevant Iraqi authorities saw to it that all sensitive equipment and instruments, including drilling equipment, were transferred to safe locations.

On 28 October 2014, Iraqi armed forces regained control of the Al-Muthanna bunkers' site and conducted an initial assessment to determine the extent of damage to the project infrastructure. Assessment teams have confirmed the integrity of the Al-Muthanna bunkers' walls and entries, although the site's infrastructure, control units and processing systems suffered extensive damage, calling for replacements of some systems and repairs to the site's infrastructure.

The Al-Muthanna bunkers' site is still under the control of the Government's military forces and officials and citizens alike are still denied access to it. I wish to explain that the location of the Al-Muthanna bunkers project is part of the larger area where current military operations aimed at rooting out terrorists are being conducted, and is used as a base for military operations in the surrounding areas. My country's delegation will make a comprehensive technical presentation to respond to all queries for clarification.

The Government of the Republic of Iraq reiterates its commitment to continue implementing the destruction plan for the remnants of the former regime's chemical programme, as early as possible, in accordance with Article IV, paragraph 8, of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and calls upon the States Parties thereto to comply with its provisions and with relevant international resolutions, including United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which recognises the need for concerted international efforts to prevent these materials from falling into the hands of terrorist groups, and resolution 2170 (2014).

In the light of the above, and with every passing day, the importance of the universality of the Convention becomes clearer and clearer. My country's delegation appreciates the Director-General's efforts for achieving the universality of the Convention and his using all possible means to encourage the remaining States to accede thereto, including, in particular, through the participation of the United Nations and its Secretary-General in this endeavour. We support his course of action for reaching this objective.

I should like to thank the Technical Secretariat for its endeavours in furthering the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and its efforts to implement the matrix of recommendations issued by the Third Review Conference. We emphasise the importance of Article X, given the exceptional circumstances in the region, which would require that an important role be undertaken by the OPCW. I also recall the importance of implementation of Article XI, as indicated in the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

On behalf of my country's delegation, I should also like to extend my thanks and appreciation to H.E. Ambassador Grace Asirwatham for the services she has rendered to the OPCW during her tenure as Deputy Director-General. We wish her success in her future endeavours.

As this is the last session of the Executive Council to be held under your chairmanship, allow me to express to you my highest appreciation for the excellent manner with which you have steered its sittings, and wish you lasting success.

Finally, I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the OPCW official website.

Thank you.

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