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NEW ZEALAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JANET LOWE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW AT THE
SEVENTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Thank you Mr Chairman.

I will be brief. New Zealand takes this opportunity to reiterate its ongoing concerns regarding the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and considers it imperative that the Executive Council continues to monitor the situation on a regular basis.

New Zealand fully supports the continued work of the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission in the light of its three reports which have presented strong and credible evidence that weaponised chlorine was used systematically and repeatedly in the attacks throughout 2014. The international response must match the seriousness of the allegations and those responsible must be held to account. The adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015) on 5 March reflects the continuing concern and attention of the international community towards this issue. New Zealand wishes to recognise the work of the OPCW which provided the foundation for this resolution.

New Zealand is pleased to hear of the progress made in the destruction of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons production facilities. At the same time the continued delays in the process remain a concern.

New Zealand also commends the work of the Declaration Assessments Team and urges the Syrian Government to cooperate fully to address the outstanding issues that have been identified and to provide all the necessary assurances in this regard.

Turning to other issues for consideration by the OPCW, New Zealand continues to support the call by the Government of Australia for consultations on the weaponisation of central nervous system-acting chemicals in law enforcement. We share the concerns raised by Australia and others in relation to the health and safety risk of such chemicals, and the possibility of deliberate misuse. New Zealand will soon commence a process to consider this issue, with a view to determining a national position.

I ask that this statement be recorded as an official document of this session, and published on the OPCW's external server and public website.

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