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SWITZERLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR URS BREITER
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SWITZERLAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,

In one month, the city of Ypres will commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the first use of massive chemical weapons in a military conflict. Besides honouring the victims of these tragic events, this ceremony will be an opportunity to remind the world that the horrors committed one hundred years ago find an echo today in the Syrian Arab Republic. Despite tremendous efforts undertaken by this Organisation and its Member States, the use of chemical weapons against civil populations, unfortunately, remains relevant today as the conclusions of the Fact-Finding Mission confirm. In order to eliminate this threat, Switzerland supports without reserve the OPCW's work and calls on all Member States to rigorously respect the obligations that derive from their adhesion to the Convention on chemical weapons.

As regards the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons, Switzerland takes good note of the information contained in the Director-General's report and welcomes the fact that the destruction of the 12 chemical weapons facilities is on the right track. We would like once again to congratulate the Director-General as well as the OPCW and United Nations personnel involved in these operations for their efforts. Switzerland regrets that the precarious security situation in the Syrian Arab Republic prevents the access to three facilities thus delaying the destruction process.

In order to clear up any doubts that could subsist, we hope that the Syrian declaration issue will be as soon as possible and once for all clarified.

Moreover, my delegation wishes to thank the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission for its work performed in particularly difficult conditions. This mission must be carried on until the facts are completely elucidated.

The incapacitating chemical agent issue remains at the very heart of my delegation's concerns. Switzerland, in close cooperation with Australia notably, carries on its informal contacts aiming at informing delegations interested in this subject. We call on all States Parties who are able to clarify their position on the incapacitating chemical agent issue to do so, either by exposing their national policies or by supporting the idea of launching a discussion within the OPCW. I would like to thank the delegations which made a statement in this respect. To cope with this challenge, Switzerland will relentlessly pursue its



engagement in collaboration with the organs of this Organisation and the delegations that are willing to move forward on this question.

Finally, Mr Chairman, I wish to express my thanks for your fine leadership guiding the deliberations of the Council, a task which you undertook with subtlety, distinction and competence.

At last, I would like to request this statement to be circulated as an official document of this Seventy-Eighth Session of the Executive Council.

Thank you.

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