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FINLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LIISA TALONPOIKA
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FINLAND TO THE OPCW AT THE
SEVENTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

Finland fully aligns itself with the statement made by Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

I would like to thank the Director-General Üzümcü for his statement and Technical Secretariat for their valuable work. Since this is the first Council session chaired by the Italian Ambassador Azzarello I want to wish him success during the chairmanship. I also want to express my gratitude to the outgoing Deputy Director-General, Ambassador Asirwatham and at the same time welcome her successor, Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao.

Finland remains extremely concerned about continuous reports of the use of chemicals as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. It is of utmost importance to condemn in the strongest possible terms the misuse of chemicals and to make clear that we do not allow it to happen without serious consequences. That is why we give our full support to the Fact-Finding Mission's work.

We await with a great interest the presentation of the Declaration Assessment Team. We must get full assurance that all gaps and discrepancies in Syrian declarations are clarified.

Furthermore, as has been stressed before, the safety and security of the FFM's and DAT's personnel must remain a priority during their missions.

As the Director-General pointed out, I am happy to inform the Executive Council that on 11 June 2015 the Ekokem Riihimäki waste treatment and disposal facility concluded the disposal and the treatment of the chemicals and effluent received from the Syrian Arab Republic and the MV Cape Ray. This effort was a part of the commercial arrangement between Ekokem and the OPCW. An OPCW inspection team will shortly deploy to Finland to verify completion of this process. We appreciate Technical Secretariat's excellent cooperation as well as our National Authority, VERIFIN, for providing assistance in this endeavour.

I wish to recognise that the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs has recently released the lessons learned workshop report of the Multi-National Maritime Transport Operation (MMTO) (to remove and transport the Syrian chemical weapons in furtherance of



Security Council Resolution 2118 (2013)). The workshop was organised by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the OPCW in early March here in The Hague. This was a useful exercise and we wish that the best practices are carefully studied.

In terms of the future of the Organisation, we thank warmly the Technical Secretariat for its note "OPCW in 2025" and we are looking forward to participating in discussions on the topic. New developments in science and technology should be followed intensively and regularly. Verification plays a remarkable role in this context. It is also clear that cooperation between all stakeholders needs to be enhanced.

We also welcome the draft decision on the establishment of an Advisory Board on Education and Outreach. It will provide concrete tools for promoting the principles of this Convention.

Finally, we thank the Director-General for presenting the draft Programme and Budget for 2016 and we are grateful to all States Parties for their support to have the possibility to facilitate those deliberations.

I would like to request this statement to be circulated as an official document of this session of the Executive Council.

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