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**RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION  
AT THE SEVENTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

As this is your first regular session of the Executive Council, on behalf of the delegation of the Russian Federation, we would like to wish you every success in this important post and assure you of our full support and readiness to cooperate constructively to ensure that the Council's work is as successful as possible.

The Russian Federation, as per the decision of the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, is taking all necessary measures to complete the destruction of remaining chemical weapons in the shortest possible time.

In the time since the Seventy-Eighth Session of the Executive Council, over 1,360 tonnes of Category 1 chemical weapons have been destroyed. As at 6 July 2015, Russia has destroyed 35,881 tonnes of Category 1 chemical weapons, or 89.8% of the initially declared amount. During the briefing on the corresponding agenda item, we will be prepared to discuss in detail the status of the destruction of the remaining chemical weapons stockpiles in the Russian Federation, including the prospects for the soonest possible completion of this process, as well as which technical, organisational, and administrative measures we are taking toward this end.

The Russian Federation has taken note of the latest reports by the Director-General and the Syrian Arab Republic on the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme and notes with satisfaction the due level of cooperation that the Syrian authorities continue to demonstrate to the OPCW Technical Secretariat. We are also encouraged by the considerable progress in the destruction of 12 former chemical weapons production facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic, making it possible to count on the completion of this process in the very near future.

We continue to carefully follow the activity of the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team's mission in the Syrian Arab Republic in line with Article III of the Convention. It must also be noted that extensive and scrupulous work conducted by the mission in close cooperation with the Syrian Arab Republic has made it possible to clarify many issues concerning the former military chemical programme of the Syrian Arab Republic.

At the same time, we would like to reiterate that the mission's key task is not to establish the guilt of the Syrian Arab Republic, but on the contrary, to reinforce trust in it as a trustworthy



and responsible Party to the Convention that is striving to bring its initial declaration in line with its requirements (and that declaration, we will recall, was prepared in an unprecedented short period of time in conditions of unprecedented complexity). That is why the calls for Damascus to clarify one or another piece of information about its chemical programme should not go beyond the requirements of the Convention, especially as the Syrian Arab Republic, voluntarily taking on unprecedented measures of transparency, has already submitted to the OPCW a large amount of additional information and is prepared to continue in the same spirit.

We are carefully following the renewed activity of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission to establish the facts of the alleged use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and hope that the due level of cooperation and exchange of information between the mission and the Syrian Arab Republic will be upheld with regard to all of the efforts of the mission, including its work in third countries. The sovereign rights and interests of the Syrian Arab Republic, where incidents being investigated by the mission have taken place, and the citizens of which have suffered as a result, must be respected unconditionally. The principle of cooperation, which presumes an appropriate level of involvement on the part of an interested State Party in the fact-finding process, is at the foundation of the Convention's verification and inspection regime. This is what the Council's decision dated 4 February was based upon. This is what many delegations spoke about, including ours, when discussing the methods and practices of the mission and its first reports. Only this kind of approach will support the independent and unbiased nature of the mission's activities, and ensure trust in the results of its work.

We have carefully examined the Note by the Secretariat entitled "The OPCW in 2025: Ensuring a World Free of Chemical Weapons", and we share its key conclusion: in light of the forthcoming completion of the chemical weapons destruction process by possessor States, the OPCW must retain its status as the premier international organisation working for a world free of chemical weapons, with a focus on preventing their re-emergence by implementing all provisions of the Convention in an effective, efficient, and non-discriminatory manner.

At the same time, the document contains a number of very controversial points, with regard to which the OPCW has yet to reach a consensus on whether or not they truly fit into the object and purpose of the Convention. The subject at hand concerns, in particular, the introduction of strict control over all chemicals, a more stringent incapacitants regime, the renunciation of the principle of the voluntary nature of sample collection during chemical industry inspections, and sea-dumped chemical weapons, among other topics. We believe that the controversial—to put it lightly—status of these matters must not be ignored in upcoming discussion of the future of the OPCW.

This session's agenda includes an item on establishing an Advisory Board on Education and Outreach. We have carefully analysed the Note by the Director-General and the draft decision of the Council on this matter, and we believe it requires more work. For example, the draft terms of reference of the new advisory body state that the criteria for selection of its members almost completely match the specialisations of experts currently serving on the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). In this regard, a question arises: would it not be possible to form a sub-group of the SAB for these same purposes, strengthening it with appropriate experts? Further, the creation of this kind of body as a separate structure with budget-based financing clearly contradicts the current efforts to optimise and cut the OPCW's budget expenses.

Ahead of the Seventy-Ninth Session, the Secretariat circulated a Note entitled “Mid- to Long-Term Staffing Plan”. A briefing was also organised on this matter for the States Parties. We are currently carefully examining the Secretariat’s proposals. In our opinion, this matter is of exceptional importance within the context of restructuring the Organisation, and it is obvious that during consideration of the proposed plan, the Council needs to base itself on paragraph 31 of Article VII, in line with which the Council, while promoting the effective implementation of, and compliance with, the Convention, shall supervise the activities of the Secretariat. Accordingly, in considering the Secretariat’s proposed new top structure of the Secretariat, one should always keep in mind the need to maintain its balance and integrity and, where needed, the independence of key units of the Secretariat. When reviewing the distribution of posts, it is equally important to comply with the principle of geographical fairness, as well as equality among regional groups. Finally, we cannot forget about the OPCW’s language policy, which is built upon the equality of all six official languages of the Organisation and is based upon adequate linguistic support, which takes on even more importance, for example, when it comes to multilingual support for the OPCW website, as well as the Secretariat’s efforts in education and outreach.

The Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism held a productive meeting on 6 July. We believe it is important for the Organisation to clearly recognise its role in countering terrorist threats, including prevention and response. How can the OPCW contribute—in line with its mandate—and where do we need to make use of other institutions and forms of interaction to counter terrorism? Once we have defined the limits of our abilities within the OPCW, we will be able to more effectively use resources to develop and adopt practical, useful, and efficient measures in counterterrorism. In our view, the material prepared by the Secretariat forms a solid foundation for dialogue on this matter, and we believe that a substantive and productive discussion will begin on this issue soon. We also support the idea voiced by the Director-General and some delegations that a more substantive approach be taken in working on these matters by a specialised sub-group involving experts from the capitals.

We continue to carefully follow the status of the implementation of Article VII of the Convention and the progress in national implementation. The situation is gradually improving, although we would be hard-pressed to find it satisfactory at this stage. Without continued additional efforts in this area, we cannot hope to achieve full national implementation—a guarantee of the effectiveness of the Convention—in the near future. In this regard, we welcome the continuation of discussions within informal consultations under the facilitation of Mr Braha.

It is also clear that it is necessary to activate the efforts of the delegations and the Secretariat in working on Article XI, the realistic, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of which is an integral part of the Convention regime. Robust, mutually beneficial international cooperation will guarantee the soonest implementation of the Convention’s ambitious objective: creating a world free of chemical weapons. In this regard, we support the efforts of the Secretariat related to the preparation of a single document that will take into account the vision of all States Parties concerning continued interaction on Article XI.

I would like to draw your attention to the Note by the Secretariat entitled “Technical Secretariat’s Procedure for Handling Cases of Schedule 1 Chemicals as Unavoidable By-Products” (S/1272/2015, dated 1 May 2015). The Secretariat put in a great deal of work for the approval of the procedures set out in this Note and many delegations were actively involved in it, including the Russian delegation. We are also grateful that a number of our

comments on the proposed procedures were taken into account. At the same time, we still have a number of questions, both on the contents of this Note, as well as the Secretariat's proposed procedure for bringing the innovations it involves into force. We plan to address this matter in more detail under the "Any Other Business" agenda item.

On 18 June 2015, representatives of the delegations of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention visited the CBRN-Defence Centre in the Netherlands. This visit was organised per the initiative of the Permanent Representation of the Netherlands. The participants of this visit, which included a representative of the Russian delegation, had the opportunity to learn about the impressive potential of this institution, which is dedicated to responding to potential CBRN threats and to witness the professionalism of its staff. We thank the delegation of the Netherlands for this useful visit.

With regard to the departure of the Deputy Director-General, Her Excellency Ms Asirwatham, from the Secretariat, we would like to note her high level of professionalism, voice our appreciation for her work in this post, note her considerable personal contribution to the achievements of the OPCW, and wish her success in her future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Seventy-Ninth Session of the Executive Council.

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