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TURKEY

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SADIK ARSLAN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY TO THE OPCW AT THE
EIGHTIETH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,

First of all, allow me to congratulate and express our warm welcome to H.E. Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao on his new assignment as the Deputy Director-General. I would like to assure him our continuous support in his future endeavours.

At the outset, I would also like to thank Mr Director-General Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü for his extensive update today, which, as usual, gives us an invaluable overview of and an excellent guidance for the work of the Organisation.

I also wish to express our deep appreciation to the OPCW staff for their commitment and dedication to the work of the Organisation and their relentless efforts regarding the ongoing operations of the OPCW specifically in Syria.

As the Executive Council is well aware, the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime in Syria remains undiminished in defiance to existing international norms and obligations, first and foremost to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

As we underscored many times in the previous sessions of the Council, the complete destruction of the chemical weapons in Syria should be kept as the main priority of the States Parties and the OPCW. This is vital from the international and regional security perspective as it is crucial for the credibility and relevance of the overall Chemical Weapons Convention regime.

Clearly, the gaps, discrepancies and inconsistencies contained in the Syrian declarations of chemical weapons, in combination of the reports of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), point out to the continuation of the use of the chemical weapons by the Assad regime in Syria.

We strongly condemn the unabated use of chlorine by the regime forces against innocent civilians and expect the OPCW to continue to focus on complete and irreversible elimination of chemical weapons in Syria.

We thank the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) for the report on the work covering the period up to September 2015. Our capital will carefully examine this report.



Nevertheless, our preliminary assessment on the report has, once again, proven our worries right. The report clearly indicates that despite 11 visits of the DAT, the regime in Syria has deliberately been concealing the facts about the substance and scope of its chemical weapons programmes. The findings of the report with regard to the sulfur mustard, ricin toxin and discrepancies on DF and chemical weapons munitions have deepened our concerns.

This consistent non-compliance of Syria should no longer be tolerated without inflicting severe consequences on the Assad regime in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Turkey firmly believes that inaction is not an option. The Chemical Weapons Convention stipulates that “individuals, entities, groups, or governments involved in the use of chemicals as weapons, including chlorine or any other toxic chemical” must be held accountable.

In this respect, we welcome the adoption of the United Nations Security Council resolution 2235 (2015) forming a Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) to determine who is responsible for perpetuating chemical attacks in Syria.

We are confident that the OPCW’s unique expertise will provide a substantial contribution to the United Nations efforts towards preventing impunity for the perpetrators of this war crime and crime against humanity.

At the same time, Turkey fully supports the decision of the Director-General to maintain the work of the FFM for the investigations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

In this vein, we also fully support the work of both the DAT and the FFM. We would like to praise the exemplary professionalism and commitment of the OPCW's both team and mission members.

The efforts of the Organisation to address the discrepancies and gaps in Assad regimes' declarations and in establishing the facts on the continuous use of chemical weapons in Syria are crucially important.

We share the determination of the States Parties in furthering the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In this sense, we would like to express our appreciation for the recent accession of Myanmar to the Convention.

We also welcome the fact that Angola will fully accede to the Convention this month. Turkey sincerely hopes that the engagement with South Sudan can soon translate into further expansion of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This would be another important step forward for the full universality of the Convention.

Taking this opportunity, we would like to thank Director-General Üzümcü for his precious efforts on the future role of the Organisation and his initiative to organise a retreat for Ambassadors which took place 1 October 2015.

We believe that while maintaining the security and disarmament priorities of the Organisation, carrying out concrete deterrence measures against the re-emergence of

chemical weapons and holding the perpetrators of them accountable will be crucial for the future credibility of the OPCW.

I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session of the Council and be posted on the external server and the website.

Thank you.

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