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

Thank you, Mr Chairperson. Thanks too to the Director-General for his update, and the Technical Secretariat for their preparations for this meeting.

New Zealand welcomes the Executive Council's continued focus on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, and considers it critical that the Council continues to monitor the situation closely. While we welcomed the completion of the destruction of all chemical weapons declared by the Syrian Arab Republic earlier this year, the Syria file is far from closed.

Accordingly, New Zealand strongly supports the work of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and is deeply concerned with the findings of the latest DAT report which - yet again - calls into question the integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Two years after the DAT began its work, and following intensive consultations with the Syrian Government, we appear to be no closer to obtaining answers regarding the "gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies" in the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration. Furthermore, in nine of the 17 unresolved issues which, as others have noted, touch on all aspects of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons programme, the DAT has concluded that no further progress is possible.

This is deeply concerning. To preserve the integrity of this Organisation and the Convention, the Executive Council has no choice but to take action, and in this regard New Zealand considers the adoption of the draft decision before us to be entirely appropriate.

New Zealand also strongly supports the work of the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mission (JIM). The ongoing and credible allegations of chemical weapons use in the Syrian Arab Republic are disturbing. As we have said before, the international response must match the seriousness of these allegations, and those responsible must be held to account.

In this connection Mr Chairperson, I am pleased to advise that New Zealand has made a financial contribution to the costs of the JIM and is currently finalising a contribution to the OPCW's Trust Fund for Syria Missions.

In addition, New Zealand appreciates the regular updates provided by Iraq regarding its investigations into the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors on its territory, and commends the cooperation between Iraq and the OPCW on this issue.



New Zealand also supports the ongoing consideration of options for destruction of Libya's remaining chemical weapons stockpile. We remain hopeful that secure and effective options can be found, despite the significant challenges.

New Zealand also continues to support the call for consultations on the weaponisation of central nervous system-acting chemicals in law enforcement. We share the concerns raised by other States Parties in relation to the health and safety risks of such chemicals, and the possibility of their deliberate misuse.

Finally Mr Chairperson, New Zealand supports the establishment of an Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW. The strategic setting for the OPCW's work is dynamic, and the advent of new challenges requires the OPCW to ensure it has a clear strategic direction, remains fit for purpose and retains the capabilities to undertake its tasks efficiently and effectively.

In closing Mr Chairperson, I would like to note that this is New Zealand's last session in our current term on the Executive Council. We have been pleased to be able to contribute to the governance of the OPCW over the last two years, and assure you of our continuing cooperation on the important and complex issues on the Council's agenda.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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