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NETHERLANDS

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PAUL WILKE
ACTING PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NETHERLANDS TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,

Let me begin by congratulating you on the assumption of the chair of the Council and wishing you success in the execution of your important function. I assure you of the full co-operation and support of my delegation.

The Netherlands associates itself with the statement pronounced by the Permanent Representative of Slovakia on behalf of the European Union. In addition, my delegation wishes to express some comments in a national capacity.

The delegation of the Netherlands thanks the Director-General for his opening statement and the Vice-Chairpersons for their reports.

It will come as no surprise that my delegation takes the floor to express its deepest concern about the report of the Director-General on the outcome of his high-level consultations with the Syrian Arab Republic (EC-82/HP/DG.2, dated 30 June 2016) and the report on the work of the Declaration Assessment Team (EC-82/HP/DG.3, dated 4 July 2016).

Before going into the report itself, I wish to restate our deep admiration and respect for the professional manner in which the Director-General and other officials of the Secretariat, in particular the members of the Declaration Assessment Team, continue to perform their duties. They do so with patience and perseverance and with both the diplomatic skills and the technical knowledge required to try and unravel the fabric of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

Patience is also what has been asked of the States Parties during the more than two years since the first round of consultations between the DAT and Syria in April 2014. Sixteen visits to the country and several rounds of consultations in The Hague, totalling countless hours of meetings, have not led to clarity about the full scope of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. On the contrary, the number of gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the initial declaration has steadily increased, even after the numerous amendments and additions thereto. The most recent reports could hardly be clearer in their conclusions: contrary to what Syria has claimed since it submitted its initial declaration, the role of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in the chemical weapons programme has been substantial, and all relevant parts of the SSRC therefore need to be declared under Article III of the Convention.



The majority of results of analysis of samples taken at different locations in Syria showed the presence of unexpected or undeclared chemical compounds. In light of the fact that many of the explanations provided by the Syrian Arab Republic are not scientifically or technically plausible, the international community is confronted with the presence of several undeclared chemical warfare agents.

The Secretariat is unable to verify the quantities of chemical weapons destroyed or consumed prior to Syria's accession to the Convention, leaving doubts about Syria's claims.

Perhaps the most worrying conclusion in the Director-General's report is, and I quote: "... that a continuation of this effort without a change in approach by the Syrian Arab Republic is unlikely to yield concrete results". Unquote.

This Council has made it very clear on numerous occasions that the only thing that will be acceptable is full disclosure by the Syrian Arab Republic about all aspects of its chemical weapons programme. Like we have stated several times before, it is incumbent upon them to convince the members of this Council that each and every element of their chemical weapons programme has been declared and dismantled completely and irreversibly.

The reports before this session of the Council make it abundantly clear that the Syrian Arab Republic has not given full disclosure, that it has not provided the required co-operation to the Secretariat and therefore that it has not acted consistent with its obligations under the Convention.

In light of the above, the delegation of the Netherlands supports the adoption of the draft decision on the report of the Director-General on the outcome of the consultations with the Syrian Arab Republic.

Like other members of the Council, the Netherlands has repeatedly voiced its grave concern about the continued use of chemical weapons in Syria. In this regard we have expressed our support for the work of the Fact-Finding Mission and we continue to do so.

And finally on Syria, we look forward to the report of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, established by UN Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), which is mandated to identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We see this as a crucial step towards full accountability for these heinous crimes.

Another issue that has required the attention of delegations in recent months is the threat of the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors, including terrorists. We commend the efforts of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and its Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors, and the leadership shown by their respective Chairs, Ambassador Joe Tony Aidoo of Ghana and Ambassador María Teresa Infante of Chile. Discussions in these fora have shown the scope of the threat, and the wide variety of tools available to counter the menace. It would be fitting that this Council, as the guardian of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the near-universal instrument prohibiting the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstance, would reiterate the role the OPCW has to play in worldwide efforts to counter the threat of chemical terrorism. The Netherlands therefore supports the adoption of the draft decision on this issue, submitted by 10 delegations as document EC-82/DEC/CRP.4.

Thank you.