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PANAMA

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR WILLYS DELVALLE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,

It is an honour to welcome you as Chairperson of this Executive Council, and to extend our welcome to the Director-General, H.E. Ambassador Ahmed Üzümcü, and all of the participants meeting here today.

Please allow me to express my gratitude to the Director-General for the hard work he has done with the support of each staff member of the Technical Secretariat. This is a special occasion allowing us to offer our respect and congratulate you on the presentation of such a complete and detailed report based on joint efforts.

Over the course of this year, within the framework of the OPCW, we have addressed a variety of substantial matters and we have taken important decisions, always in an effort to take significant steps toward strengthening this Organisation. The recent establishment of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW is of singular importance because of the role it will play in developing the recommendations that will serve as the basis for outlining a new vision for empowering the OPCW within the scope of our mandate.

Moving forward on these matters is important, as is strengthening the sessions of the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors, which continue to be overseen with a high level of professionalism and dedication by the Chairperson, Ambassador of Chile, H.E. María Teresa Infante.

We also praise the willingness of all States Parties to take on the challenge of adjusting the resource of the Organisation in a flexible manner during the review of the 2017 Programme and Budget.

With regard to the current budget, we have been able to maintain our efforts in international cooperation, capacity-building, and the exchange of best practices. Regular training and updates on the obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention are essential for maintaining a sensitisation strategy as we pursue our ultimate goal: a world free of chemical weapons.

We are committed to ensuring that the inspection and verification regime is maintained, that efforts continue to ensure that the required declarations are submitted, and that experience gained with regard to legislation is shared, while bearing in mind new initiatives made by our National Authorities.



We have made progress in many areas, but we are concerned about the possible allegations of the use of chemical weapons in our times. Our Organisation and all of the delegations here today have the responsibility to work willingly on the information gathered by the technical teams.

For Panama, the use of a chemical as a weapon is clearly and explicitly prohibited by the Chemical Weapons Convention. The use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and violates international law. Panama vehemently condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone and under any circumstance. There is no justification whatsoever for the loss of human lives as a result of these actions.

Panama has supported and will continue to value the efforts of the international community to eradicate chemical weapons from the world; it is within this context that Panama:

- has adhered to resolution S/RES/2118 (2013) of the United Nations Security Council, which calls for the destruction of the chemical weapons stockpile of the Syrian Arab Republic and urges this country to cooperate with the OPCW;
- supports the work carried out by the Fact-Finding Mission and recognises the work of the Declaration Assessment Team in Syria;
- welcomed the establishment of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism via resolution 2235 (2015) of the Security Council, marking a new chapter in multilateral efforts on this matter.

It is with concern that we heard the report by the Director-General on the conclusions made based on the results of the consultations maintained with the Syrian Arab Republic during the past session of the Executive Council, when we were informed that the Secretariat “is not able to resolve all identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic, and therefore cannot fully verify that the Syrian Arab Republic has submitted a declaration that can be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Convention”.

Within this context, we are doubly concerned by the Director-General’s explanations of the repeated requests for information from the Syrian authorities; these requests remain unresolved due to the gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies within the declaration. The third report by the Joint Investigative Mechanism was conclusive about some of the incidents that were registered and also pointed to the few advances made as stated in the Note by the Director-General on the progress made in the elimination of the Syrian chemical programme.

Ladies and gentlemen:

This Executive Council is responsible for evaluating the technical information provided it, and carefully analysing the state of the situation; we have an opportunity to form one voice to take decisions as we take on these abhorrent crimes and to remain clear on the point that the use of chemical weapons cannot be tolerated.

I request that this declaration be included as an official document of this session of the Executive Council.

Thank you.