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SWITZERLAND

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND
AT THE EIGHTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,

As this session is the last one that you are chairing, allow me to convey to you the compliments of the Swiss delegation for the excellent work accomplished throughout the past year.

The destruction operations of the remaining Libyan chemical weapons of Category 2 in Germany are well underway. The rapid and efficient execution of this mission demonstrates that the cooperation between the Technical Secretariat and the States Parties contributes in a fundamental manner to the success of such operations. Switzerland also welcomes the progress in relation with the destruction plans of the chemical weapons remnants stored at the Al Muthana site.

The members of this Council took an important decision during its Eighty-Third Session after an international and independent mechanism (JIM) concluded that the Syrian Arab Republic had used chemical weapons on three occasions – as did the self-proclaimed group “Islamic State” on one occasion. Ignoring these conclusions and not reacting to these violations would have put at stake this essential pillar of the edifice of disarmament, non-proliferation and international humanitarian law that the OPCW represents. This is why this Council has decided to condemn these acts and attempt to prevent them by adopting concrete measures. One of these measures consists in conducting inspections at the facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre in Barzah and Jamrayah. The Technical Secretariat was finally able to carry out a visit. We regret that the deployment of this mission was postponed for so long and urge the Syrian authorities to cooperate with the OPCW in order to achieve tangible results. In addition, Switzerland reiterates its deep concern about the absence of progress concerning the Syrian declaration. The latest report of the Declaration Assessment Team puts forward certain developments; however the great majority of pending issues remains unresolved.

Chemical weapons allegations in the Syrian Arab Republic have not ceased. Switzerland condemns in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons by all parties. It is of utmost importance that the perpetrators of these grave violations of international law, which can constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, be held accountable. We therefore welcome the establishment, following a decision by the United Nations General Assembly, of an international, impartial and independent mechanism which will assist in the investigation



of the most serious crimes under international law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 – including the use of chemical weapons.

The recent allegations of chemical weapon attacks by the self-proclaimed group “Islamic State” in Mosul, Iraq, are extremely concerning. The OPCW has an important role to play in the global fight against terrorism. Its contribution is particularly essential in terms of prevention and response to the use of toxic chemical agents for hostile purposes by non-State actors. Moreover, the adoption of an effective national legislation as well as its implementation by States Parties remain key elements to meet this challenge.

Switzerland is of the view that maintaining a high quality verification regime and preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons require sufficient resources and capabilities that will allow the Organisation not only to follow but also to anticipate scientific and technological developments. In this framework, we reiterate our belief in the need to launch a discussion on central nervous system-acting chemicals. I encourage all States Parties to support the joint paper related to this topic.

Finally, the incident that took place in Kuala Lumpur is deeply concerning. It underlines the necessity to reinforce the analysis and response capabilities to a chemical weapon attack within the OPCW and the States Parties as well as to maintain a strict international norm against chemical weapons. The universal ratification of the Convention is equally a fundamental aspect. We thank the Malaysian Ambassador for his briefing this morning and encourage the Malaysian authorities to collaborate closely with the OPCW and to share any relevant information related to this incident.

I thank you.

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