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UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SIR GEOFFREY ADAMS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Thank you Madam Chairperson, Director-General,

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland supports the European Union statement made by the Permanent Representative of Malta. I would like to add some additional remarks on a few matters of particular importance.

When this Executive Council (hereinafter ‘the Council’) last met in November we took action on the reports of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) on Syria. We were pleased that this Council acted on its mandate and took measures to address the serious conclusions of the JIM: that both the Syrian Arab Republic and Da’esh had been responsible for chemical weapons use in Syria. Those terrible crimes demand that perpetrators are brought to justice. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and France, with the support of the United States of America, proposed a resolution at the Security Council to promote accountability. However, despite the agreement of the clear majority of Security Council Members, it was vetoed by two members. After the vote on 28 February, the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom said that it was deeply disappointing that the Russian Federation and China had blocked the United Nations Security Council from taking action in response to the appalling use of chemical weapons in Syria. Despite the clear findings of the JIM that chemical weapons were used by the Syrian regime and Da’esh on the Syrian people, and in the face of support from the majority of the Security Council, the Russian Federation, along with China, chose to stand in the way of international action, at a time when we continue to see reports alleging chemical weapons use in Syria by both the Syrian regime and Da’esh.

The Russian Federation and China’s refusal to allow the Security Council to act makes the work of the OPCW and this Council all the more important. The decision that this Council took in November demanded full Syrian compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”) and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). It must be implemented in full. This means that Syria must stop using chemical weapons. The Syrian authorities must answer all outstanding issues relating to their declaration of their chemical weapons programme; they must permit inspections at the SSRC; and they must permit inspections at all sites in Syria which were identified by the JIM as



being involved in the weaponisation, storage, delivery and use of toxic chemicals as weapons and must end the use of chemical weapons.

The extent of the gaps in Syria's declaration, its cancellation of a planned visit by Inspectors to the SSRC - reinstated only under pressure just before this Council session - and the ongoing use of toxic chemicals as weapons leaves substantial grounds for concern that Syria has retained elements of its stockpile and is prepared to use them again. Both Syria's use of chemical weapons and its failure to fully declare its programme must be addressed before it can be considered to be in compliance with the Convention. We note that the Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister has now agreed to meet the Director-General in The Hague this spring. We hope that he will finally supply the long outstanding documents requested by the Technical Secretariat, and that he will bring with him those personnel whom the OPCW have long sought to interview.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland welcomes the Government of Iraq's submission of its plan to destroy its remaining legacy chemical weapons stocks stored in bunkers at Al Muthana in the coming months. We are glad to see that Iraq plans to begin the work shortly, and that they will ensure that the chemicals are irreversibly put beyond use.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is extremely concerned about the continued reports of chemical weapons being used by terrorists in Iraq and in Syria. On 3 March, the ICRC published a troubling report indicating possible chemical weapons use in Mosul. We are grateful to the Government of Iraq for sharing with this Council their report on their investigations into attacks in Iraq, supported by the OPCW's Technical Assistance Visit. We welcome the Director-General's offer of further assistance to Iraq in response to the latest incident, and look forward to Iraq continuing to keep this Council informed of their investigations.

This only serves to underline why it is so important that the international community works together to defeat this terrorist group once and for all. It also shows why we must continue our efforts to prevent Da'esh and other non-State actors from acquiring or using chemical weapons. There are a number of further practical steps that the OPCW and all States Parties could take to tackle the chemical terrorism threat. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland hopes that this Council can reach agreement soon on the draft decision on non-State actors, as proposed by the United States of America and Germany in 2016. Based on work of the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors, it sets out measures that will demonstrate further this Organisation's commitment to support States to address the chemical terrorism threat.

The relevance of the Convention and OPCW's important work has been brought into further recent focus in the wake of the events at Kuala Lumpur International Airport on 13 February 2017, and the death of a national of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We welcome OPCW's assistance to support Malaysia's investigation into the incident. We are very grateful to the Ambassador of Malaysia for the full account of this incident that he has given to the Council this morning. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is glad to give the Malaysian authorities the support they seek, as they deal with the consequences of this appalling attack.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland condemns any use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, in any circumstances. The Organisation and this Council

must do all we can to protect the international norm against their use and promote it globally. We note the importance of continuing this Organisation's focus on achieving universal adherence to the Convention. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Israel and South Sudan to join the Convention without delay.

This year will start the process to set the future direction of the Organisation. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland welcomes the useful work to date of the Future Priorities Working Group under the Chair of the Ambassadors of Canada and South Africa, and we hope that it will help prepare for a focussed and substantive Review Conference in 2018. We will also appoint a new Director-General. It will be important to attract a wide field of candidates, and to identify someone who can carry forward, and build on, your achievements, Director-General. It is important that the values espoused by this Organisation, and recognised by the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013, will continue into the next decade.

I request that this statement be issued as an official document of this session of the Council and posted on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

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