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**Presentation to the  
OPCW Executive Council  
on 13 July 2017  
by Ambassador Jesper Vahr**

The Government of Denmark's candidate for the  
post of  
Director-General of the OPCW

*Check against delivery*

Mr. Chairman Ambassador Belal, Mr. Director General, distinguished ambassadors and delegates,

It is an honour for me to appear before the Executive Council as candidate for Director-General (DG) of the OPCW. I do so not only as the candidate of the Government of Denmark – but also with the full support of our Nordic friends: Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

Denmark has not served on the Executive Council since 2010-2011. That, however, has not prevented us from actively contributing to the work of the OPCW. Not only in the Hague – but also in the field. Only last year Denmark was in charge of the maritime transport operation to remove containers with remnants from Libya’s chemical weapons stockpile. And in 2014 Denmark played a key role in the maritime mission, which was mandated to remove the declared chemical weapons from Syria. In that maritime operation Denmark worked closely with many countries in this room such as Norway, UK, Russia, China, the US and Italy. We all know that cooperation to address the challenges pertaining to Syria, including in the OPCW, has faced difficulties lately. However, cooperation on the removal of Syria’s declared chemical weapons stockpiles is an important reminder that it is possible to get things done in a spirit of collaboration.

These efforts have not been in vain. But as the DG stated to this Council last week, “the continuing use of chemical weapons in Syria poses a serious challenge to the international community”. The norm against the use of chemical weapons is challenged – and the duty of any DG will be to do his utmost to uphold that norm and defend the Convention.

Along with the notification of my candidacy you will all previously have received my CV and a short PM that includes four preliminary focus areas that I identified. In answering the “exam questions” to candidates, I have thought it appropriate to elaborate on these four focus areas:

**Focus area 1: Destruction of the remaining stockpiles of chemical weapons by the possessor states and working towards universality of the Convention.**

We are on a good track to eliminating declared stockpiles of our current 192 member states, thus bringing us even closer to the ultimate goal of a world free of chemical weapons. That, however, should not be a cause for complacency. It is essential that the Technical Secretariat maintains its chemical weapons-related knowledge and expertise, including a rapidly deployable surge capacity that would be required to fulfil the provisions of the Convention, also in case new possessor states join the Convention. The objective of universality must be pursued with vigour. This would be a priority for me. I noted the idea by the Ekeus Panel to appoint a Special Representative for Universality. That is one possible way of ensuring visibility of this issue. Sustained, coordinated efforts in bilateral engagements is another. In any case: this issue must remain high on the agenda. Also, the issue of Abandoned Chemical Weapons (ACWs) will continue to need our full attention.

**Focus area 2: Preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons, including by ensuring a robust verification regime adapted to new circumstances, and preventing and mitigating the use of chemical weapons by non-state actors.**

The mega-trend, which will continue into the next DG's tenure, is a gradual shift of focus from verification of the destruction of chemical weapons towards preventing their re-emergence. That will mean gradually more emphasis on routine industrial inspection while still retaining the capacity to respond to requests for challenge inspections, investigations of alleged use and contingencies. But it will also mean increasingly incorporating assessments of risks to the Convention when deciding on and conducting verification activities. Engaging National Authorities to obtain assurances of accuracy and completeness of declarations, the outcome of which might impact on inspection frequency, could be one of several methods worth considering that could be part of an approach that puts added emphasis on the risks posed to the object and purpose of the Convention while still respecting the principle of non-discrimination.

We have at our disposal a unique body of knowledge in the Scientific Advisory Body (SAB) that can help us develop and refine our verification methods. While SAB recommendations are just that

– recommendations – that must be evaluated also through political prisms, we must stay attentive to how the OPCW in its verification activities can consider advances in science and technology. So ideas presented by the SAB such as utilizing all available and verifiable information, including open-source information; examining options for remote monitoring technologies; and using satellite imagery for planning non-routine missions should be given serious consideration.

Adapted industry verification and data reporting is key to effectively addressing the threat from non-state actors in the coming years. Another is promulgation and enforcement of national legislation, which forms part of my Focus area 3:

**Focus area 3: Capacity building to further national implementation and outreach to external stakeholders and international organizations.**

Capacity building is key for several reasons. All States Parties must see they have a stake – and where assistance is required for the implementation of the convention to be effective, to the benefit of all States Parties, we must work together to provide that assistance. Capacity building has three dimensions that are all important: a) national implementation support, which requires participation of all stakeholders; b) assistance and protection under Art. X, i.e. helping State Parties build capacity for protection against and in response to deliberate release of toxic chemicals, including possible attacks on chemical installations or transports; c) international cooperation, which obviously must include exchange of scientific and technological information in the field of peaceful chemical activities. The programme to strengthen cooperation with Africa, now in its fourth phase, has been successful – and constitutes a source of inspiration. But there may be scope for improvement in focusing more on quality of engagement than on quantitative Key Performance Indicators. And, in parallel, it would seem to be worth considering the scope for possibly strengthening Article XI programmes including, if possible, by giving added importance to this also within the regular OPCW budget. I would look forward, as DG, to consulting with beneficiaries and contributors alike on this important file. We must make sure we get as much bang for the buck as possible. That takes me to focus area 4.

**Focus area 4: Organizational governance: adaptation of the Technical Secretariat to reflect the changing security environment and the demands of the post-destruction era, as well as measures to improve recruitment, performance, retention, and morale.**

Change management is pivotal in any organization. One is never “done” adapting. The OPCW will continue to exist in a zero-growth reality for a foreseeable future. Adaptation is necessary for the organization to be prepared for and focused on preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

That adaptation process has already started. I note in the 2018 budget a call for “more tooth, less tail”. I agree. That shift towards positions for operational programmes must be continued. The OPCW is fortunate that its tenure policy allows for relatively quick adaptation to emerging priorities through news recruits for new tasks. But I am convinced that the tenure policy could benefit from a service check: Should it apply across the board? Would the organization benefit from added flexibility to retain critical expertise? How does the present tenure policy affect the commitment of staff?

Recruitment of professionals with the required skills and competences, staff empowerment and maintaining morale is key to high performance. In this regard measures to improve on the current imbalances regarding gender and diversity will also need the full attention of the next DG.

The importance of the management dimension of DG position can hardly be overstated. You must have the best tools that the money you allocate can buy. For that the DG is ultimately accountable.

These focus areas will need to be addressed by a person, who as DG will need to be able to perform three supplementary roles with energy and tenacity in the next four or eight years:

- The diplomatic role of facilitating effective decision-making.
- Being a visible and recognizable “face” of the Organization.
- The managerial role: running this organization efficiently on your behalf.

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I look forward to questions and comments.

P.M.

## DANISH CANDIDATE FOR POST AS DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF OPCW

- The **Government of Denmark** has nominated **Ambassador Jesper Vahr** to the post as **Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons** (OPCW) to succeed H.E. Mr Ahmet Üzümcü, whose mandate expires in May 2018.
- With reference to your country's membership of the Executive Council of the OPCW, **the Government of Denmark requests that you be favourably disposed towards Ambassador Vahr's candidature** during the 85<sup>th</sup> (July 2017) and 86<sup>th</sup> (October 2017) Session of the Executive Council in which the Council shall consider the nominated candidates.
- The recent horrific chemical attack in Syria once again underscores the necessity and importance of OPCW's work. Over the coming years, the Organization will face a progressive shift from disarmament of chemical weapons to preventing their re-emergence. To meet these challenges, **the OPCW must be both robust and adaptable.**
- **Ambassador Vahr is most qualified to engage in these challenges in the position as Director-General.** Ambassador Vahr brings extensive experience within bi- and multilateral diplomacy and security policy, including as Chef de Cabinet to the previous NATO Secretary General and postings in Syria, Turkey, and Israel.
- **Four preliminary focus areas for the OPCW** have been identified by Ambassador Vahr:
  - **Destruction of the remaining stockpiles** of chemical weapons by the possessor states and working towards universality of the Convention.
  - **Preventing the re-emergence** of chemical weapons, including by ensuring a robust verification regime adapted to new circumstances, and preventing and mitigating the use of chemical weapons by non-state actors.
  - **Capacity building** to further national implementation and outreach to external stakeholders and international organisations.
  - **Organizational governance:** adaptation of the Technical Secretariat to reflect the changing security environment and the demands of the post-destruction era, as well as measures to improve recruitment, performance, retention, and morale.
- **Denmark and the OPCW:** Denmark was among the first signatories of the CWC and ratified the Convention in 1995. In 2014, Denmark led the maritime removal of Syria's declared chemical weapons for subsequent destruction. In 2016, Denmark was in charge of the maritime transport operation transporting chemical weapons out of Libya.

## Ambassador Jesper Vahr – CV



Ambassador Jesper Vahr (born 1962) has extensive experience in bi- and multilateral diplomacy, particularly on security policy issues.

Since August 2013 he has served as Ambassador of Denmark to Israel. In this position his focus has been on the Middle East Peace Process, regional security, and bilateral Danish-Israeli political and commercial relations.

Ambassador Vahr was Chef de Cabinet to the Secretary General of NATO (former Danish Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen) 2009 – 2013, with rank of Assistant Secretary General. As the Secretary General's closest advisor Ambassador Vahr played a key role in forging consensus on a number of NATO's key achievements in those years, including the 2010 Strategic Concept, NATO's efforts to protect the population of Libya, and reforming NATO's structure and working methods. On behalf of the Secretary General Ambassador Vahr also managed NATO's International Staff (1,200 staff) on a daily basis.

From 2007 – 2009 Ambassador Vahr served as Denmark's Ambassador to Turkey and Azerbaijan (resident in Ankara, Turkey). Key issues during this assignment included Turkey's EU-relations, migration, security policy, and cooperation with Turkey in the fight against terrorism.

From 2003 till 2007 Ambassador Vahr was Director for Security Policy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Copenhagen. His portfolio included NATO institutional issues, international operations, including Denmark's military engagement in Iraq and in Afghanistan, and the issues of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. During this time, at the request of the then Secretary General of NATO, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Ambassador Vahr was seconded to NATO HQ to head the Secretary General's Reform Task Force and to elaborate a catalogue of reform proposals.

From 1999 – 2003 Jesper Vahr served as Denmark's Deputy Permanent Representative to NATO. He played a key role in promoting the NATO's enlargement and in extending partnership relations..

Previous assignments include the Middle East Peace Process desk and three years (1993 – 1996) as Deputy Chief of Mission at the Royal Danish Embassy in Damascus, Syria (also covering the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Lebanon).

He earned a Master's degree in Political Science and a Bachelor degree in English literature from the University of Aarhus, Denmark.