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**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTOPH ISRANG
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY TO
THE OPCW AT THE EIGHTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson, Director-General, distinguished colleagues,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by the delegation of Estonia. Please also allow me to thank the Director-General for his very informative statement and to commend him and the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their excellent work – often in difficult circumstances.

Our Executive Council gathers today in regular session for the eighty-fifth time since the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Despite of all the achievements of our Organisation to this point, we also have the duty to keep in mind the cruelties of the past that eventually led to the adoption of the Convention. One hundred years ago, during the First World War on 12 and 13 July 1917, huge quantities of mustard gas were used for the first time. The use of this horrific weapon by German troops in Ieper led to the dreadful death of 87 people, and more than 2000 casualties. The horrible suffering a hundred years ago should have taught mankind that nothing can justify the use of chemical weapons. Indeed: no end can ever justify their use. They are cruel, they are indiscriminate, and they spread terror and fear.

Sadly, the lesson from Ieper has not been learned to this day. A hundred years after the first use of mustard gas, the use of chemical weapons is still not only a real threat, but a horrific reality.

In a shocking attack, hitting the town of Khan Shaykhun in Idlib province on 4 April 2017, civilians, among them women and children, were killed and harmed. The OPCW has been taking action to shed light on this cruel act.

The right instrument and mechanism, the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), has recently conducted a full-fledged investigation. The FFM is well-established; its mandate is clear and undisputable. We welcome the fact that the results of the investigation have been published recently by the Technical Secretariat. The essential result of the FFM report, the use of sarin as a chemical weapon, must be a wake-up call for the entire OPCW family.



The scale of the attack in Khan Shaykhun, and the number of victims, including children and relief workers, has shocked us all. Germany strongly condemns the attack. Evidence provided points strongly towards the responsibility of the Syrian Government. It is now up to the OPCW–United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, in accordance with its mandate, to identify those responsible on the basis of the FFM report. Anyone who is responsible for such acts must be brought to justice. Many members of this Council have joined the declaration presented by France and Germany on this issue, thereby expressing their condemnation of the use of sarin. We invite others to join us.

Let me now turn to other important issues before us. A new process starting this year will be very decisive for the future direction of the Organisation: the appointment of a new Director-General. The OPCW is in need of someone who can carry forward and build on our achievements. The future Director-General, like our current Director-General is doing in an exemplary manner, has therefore to stand up for the values and goals of this Organisation, recognised by the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013. He – and I regret that we already know at this stage that it will for sure not be a she – will need to defend the Convention whenever the absolute taboo of chemical weapons is challenged. I am confident that the Executive Council – under the able leadership of its Chairperson – will give an adequate recommendation to the Conference of the States Parties in this regard.

I would also like to welcome the useful work of the Future Priorities Working Group under the Chair of the Ambassadors of Canada and South Africa and the ongoing preparations for next year's Review Conference 2018.

In order to keep our Organisation on track, another rather administrative subject is of immense importance. At this point, many thanks are due to the Director-General and his staff for the presentation of next year's budget. Concerning the liquidity and effectiveness of our Organisation, I would like to stress the obligation of all States Parties to pay their annual contributions and verification invoices. Especially States Parties holding positions in policy-making organs such as this Council should serve as role models to other Member States and therefore fulfil their obligations. Arrears from past years are an expression of disrespect for this Organisation and an expression of disrespect for those States Parties that do pay their dues. We need to live up to all our obligations under the Convention.

It is up to us, the OPCW family, to stand and work together in close international cooperation, to overcome daily challenges, but also to focus on the core objective of the OPCW: "to free the world of chemical weapons".

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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