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SWITZERLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR URS BREITER
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SWITZERLAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

Less than a week ago, this Council met for a meeting after the Fact-Finding Mission's (FFM) confirmation that sarin had been used as a chemical weapon in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017. On this occasion, I shared our deep concern regarding this attack against the pillar of disarmament and non-proliferation that the OPCW represents as well as an erosion of the Convention. It is our collective responsibility not to undermine the credibility of this organisation and to react firmly. Therefore, Switzerland supports the draft declaration presented by France and Germany.

Switzerland expresses its full confidence in and support to the FFM and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), which will now have the task to identify without ambiguity the perpetrators of the various incidents confirmed by the FFM. We thank them for the excellent work carried out in difficult conditions. Inaction in the face of these grave violations of international norms is simply not acceptable. Switzerland once again calls upon the United Nations Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court without reserve. The serious violations of international humanitarian law committed by all parties to the conflict must be prosecuted. The perpetrators of these grave violations must not evade justice.

Since more than four years, the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) has been seeking to shed light on the Syrian chemical weapons programme. Unfortunately, we have to note council after council, that the discrepancies and irregularities of the Syrian initial declaration have still not been resolved. What's worse, the last DAT report clearly highlights the lack of cooperation of the Syrian authorities. This is totally unacceptable.

In its third report, the JIM came to the conclusion that the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State' group had used chemical weapons. The use of such weapons by non-State actors is a reality that the OPCW must face. This organisation has an essential role to play in terms of prevention as well as response to such attacks. This is why Switzerland supports the adoption of the amended decision on non-State actors, which it co-sponsors.

For Switzerland, the adoption of the decision concerning the OPCW Central Analytical Database (OCAD) is essential. The development of the OCAD provides the organisation with a complete verification instrument for the analysis of chemical weapons. The inclusion



of data on non-scheduled chemicals into the revised OCAD is intended solely to facilitate the analysis of chemicals agents relevant to the Convention.

In the framework of our considerations on the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons, we reiterate our belief in the need to continue the discussion on central nervous system-acting chemicals. In this regard, we commend the last report of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and the update of the list of chemical products that fit the criteria of riot control agents as defined by the Convention.

I thank the Director-General for his presentation of the budget proposal for 2018 and wish to underline the efforts undertaken by the organisation in order to reach a zero nominal growth budget. Switzerland favours a program and a budget that allow the organisation to fulfil its core tasks while paying a particular attention to future challenges.

2017 is of symbolic significance to the OPCW as it celebrated its twentieth anniversary in April. It is also a critical year for the future of the organisation as its next Director-General will be appointed at the end of it. Switzerland is in favour of a transparent, fair and just process, which modalities are clear to all. We look forward to taking part in it and to meeting the candidates in the next days. Thank you.

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