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INDIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR VENU RAJAMONY
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

I would like to welcome you back as the Chairperson of the Executive Council. My delegation looks forward to your leadership in guiding this session to a successful conclusion. I assure you of my delegations' continued cooperation during this session.

I would like to thank the Director-General for his statement and appreciate the efforts made by the team under his leadership towards implementing the provisions of the Convention, and working towards the common goal of complete eradication of weapons of mass destruction from the world.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of NAM States Parties to the CWC and China.

2017 marks the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention as well as the founding of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The Organisation has secured the commitment of 192 nations to the Convention, thereby achieving near universality. Under the vigilant eyes of this Organisation, more than 96 per cent of chemical weapon stockpiles declared by possessor States have been eliminated. OPCW has addressed several complex challenges in these twenty years. Its achievements, recognised by the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013, are the result of the collective endeavour of the States Parties, the chemical industry, scientists and civil society.

However, in the ever-evolving global security environment, challenges continue to exist especially with regard to achieving OPCW's vision of a world free of chemical weapons and the threat of their use. These include the discovery of new toxic chemicals, technological advancements in deployment and dissemination of chemical weapons, and the threat of acquisition and use of chemical weapons by non-State actors. Hence there is a need for greater and continued vigilance and renewed efforts towards achieving general and complete disarmament.



India attaches great importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and stands for its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. We call upon the remaining States that are not Party to the Convention to consider acceding to the Convention at the earliest. Destruction of chemical weapons is the most important undertaking made by every State Party to the Convention. We urge all possessor States to take necessary steps to expedite their destruction processes.

My delegation welcomes the completion of the full and verified destruction of the declared chemical weapons stockpile by the Russian Federation. We congratulate the Russian Federation on its crossing this major milestone and commend it for its commitment to fulfilling the provisions of the Convention.

My delegation believes that the OPCW has three important tasks (1) completion of the disarmament function of the Convention (2) upholding the norm against the use of chemical weapons and (3) promoting the peaceful use of chemical technology and enhancing international cooperation in this regard.

In this context, my delegation welcomes the efforts made and the progress achieved so far in the matter of destruction of Syria's chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities. We hope that the remaining task of destruction will be completed in the earliest possible time. With regard to the initial declaration by Syria and the Declaration Assessment Team's findings, we welcome the ongoing high level consultations between Syria and the Technical Secretariat and looks forward to the resolution of all outstanding issues in a spirit of trust and cooperation.

My delegation remains deeply concerned about the reported use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, as was documented by the reports of the Fact-Finding Missions on the incidents in Um-Housh and Khan Shaykhun in Syrian Arab Republic. The use of chemical weapons is in complete disregard of humanity, reprehensible and contrary to the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention as well as accepted international legal norms. My delegation reiterates India's strong condemnation of the abhorrent use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

My delegation is also deeply worried about the reports of the so-called 'Islamic State' or ISIS/ISIL acquiring chemical weapons and their delivery systems. We request the Technical Secretariat to keep us informed of this threat and emerging challenge. Our efforts in the OPCW should help to eliminate all possibilities of any future use of chemical weapons, so that we can reach the shared goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

It has been our consistent position that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anybody, under any circumstances cannot be justified and the perpetrators of such abhorrent acts must be held accountable.

The Convention under Article XI seeks to promote peaceful uses of chemistry, including international exchange of scientific and technical information and chemicals and equipment. India welcomes the emphasis given by OPCW in this regard, through both established programmes as well as new initiatives such as compiling best practices in chemical safety and security and integrated chemical management. My delegation also urges active participation of Member States in the upcoming workshops on Review & Evaluation of Article XI. It

expresses the hope that concrete proposals can be adopted for consideration at the Twenty-Second Conference of the States Parties and the Fourth Review Conference.

My delegation notes the efforts of the Chairpersons of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors towards facilitating discussions on topics such as best practices in the area of chemical safety and security, and the counterterrorism aspects of international trade in chemicals. We also firmly believe that the full and effective implementation of all the provisions of the Convention including the National Implementation under Article VII will make a significant and effective contribution towards global counter-terrorism efforts.

Easy access to raw materials and technical knowhow, including through the internet, will make it relatively easier for criminal elements to produce chemical weapons. Emergence of non-State actors further complicates the situation. This calls for enhanced vigilance and increased adaptive capacity for the Organisation. To this end, my delegation commends the efforts of the two Co-Chairpersons of the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities (OEWG-FP).

It is our belief that the work of the OEWG-FP should be States Parties-driven and should progress through established channels of the policy-making organs (PMOs). We would like the Working Group to address all issues related to the future of the Organisation in a balanced and comprehensive manner, without any artificial timelines, and bearing in mind time-tested methods of work of our Organisation, particularly decision-making by consensus. My delegation attaches importance to the OEWG-FP and will continue to participate actively in the same.

I extend my hearty compliments to you for having conducted the election process for the appointment of the next Director-General of the OPCW. The process was not only fair and transparent but also smooth and swift. I extend my hearty compliments to Ambassador Fernando Arias of Spain for emerging as the successful consensus candidate for the post of the next Director-General of OPCW. He really deserves to assume leadership of the Technical Secretariat by virtue of his personal qualities, professional competence and best experience. I would like to use this occasion to compliment and congratulate all delegations for the camaraderie and cooperation spirit exhibited in the process of conducting straw polls to determine who enjoys the consensus. Equally, I thank those who registered interest in the position. Their enthusiasm fills us with confidence in the noble purpose and potential of this organisation. I wish them well for their future endeavours.

In conclusion, Mr Chairperson, I would request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the OPCW's public website.

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