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NEW ZEALAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LYNDAL WALKER
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Director-General, Mr Chairperson, distinguished delegates,

It is an honour for me to be here and to take the floor for the first time as New Zealand's Permanent Representative to the OPCW.

Director-General, Mr Chairperson, let me begin by assuring you of New Zealand's full commitment and support to this Organisation. Director-General, the OPCW has achieved many successes during your term and we extend our congratulations for your sound stewardship during what has been a challenging period. The incoming Director-General can be certain of New Zealand's continued support in the years to come. We welcome the emergence of Ambassador Arias as the consensus candidate.

The OPCW and its Member States have achieved a number of successes since our last meeting. We congratulate our Russian colleagues on completing the verified destruction of their chemical weapons programme last month.

We take particular pleasure from this outcome, as New Zealand, along with some other States Parties here today, were pleased to contribute financially to the Russian Federation's destruction programme at certain points. New Zealand also expresses its gratitude to the OPCW experts that have contributed to this milestone. This is another step towards our shared goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

What progress this Organisation has made continues to be overshadowed by the case of Syria. Just last week, the OPCW reported on further alleged attacks, which occurred earlier in the year, where sarin or a sarin-like substance was used. This is yet another deeply disturbing development and we look forward to receiving the report of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in due course. These allegations, together with the conclusions of the FFM into the attacks in Khan Shaykhun and Um-Housh earlier this year, paint an increasingly dark picture. New Zealand reiterates its full and unequivocal support for the FFM, whose conduct has been professional, impartial, and beyond repute.

We also note that despite further consultations with the Syrian Government last month, the OPCW is little closer to being able to resolve all identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies in Syria's declaration; therefore the OPCW is still unable to verify that Syria has submitted an accurate and complete declaration. We note that the information provided



by the Syrian Government was assessed as insufficient to clarify any of the outstanding issues. Mr Chairperson, it is remarkable - and deeply regrettable - that many years on, this Organisation is still asking the same questions of Syria, which are still being met with empty answers. We continue to urge the Syrian Government to fully cooperate with the OPCW to ensure that such discrepancies are finally resolved.

New Zealand was pleased to sponsor the recently held chemical security workshop as a contribution to the consideration of the OPCW's future priorities. We look forward to further discussion and consideration of this topic by Member States at the Fourth Review Conference in the context of the need to respond to new challenges.

Finally, we also look forward to the adoption of a decision on non-State actors, to respond to the now-evident threat that they pose.

I ask that this statement be treated as an official document of this meeting.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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