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GERMANY

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTINE WEIL
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GERMANY TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson, Director-General, distinguished colleagues,

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by the delegation of Estonia. I would like to thank Director-General Üzümcü for his comprehensive statement and commend him and the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their dedicated work, often performed under difficult circumstances.

This session of the Executive Council again takes place in challenging times. The year 2017 not only marks the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which - with the significant support of the OPCW - has become the most successful disarmament treaty banning an entire weapons category. This year has also, once again, been marked by the use of chemical weapons, as we had to witness in Iraq, in Malaysia and especially in the Syrian Arab Republic with an even higher number of victims. We have to ask ourselves if the time has come to admit that the taboo against using chemical weapons is being eroded in front of our eyes.

It is therefore our task to preserve and further develop the OPCW so that the Organisation is well prepared to pursue its significant goals today, as well as in the future. In this context, we attach special importance to the election of a new Director-General for the term 2018-2022. The new Director-General will need to advance the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention and promote its full implementation. The person to be elected must have a viable vision for the future of the Organisation as well as sound management credentials. Several rounds of straw polls have resulted in support for the candidature of Ambassador Fernando Arias. We hope that the Executive Council will be able to endorse his candidature and recommend him to the upcoming Conference of the States Parties as the next Director-General of the Organisation. This would signal an intent to fulfil the Organisation's outstanding tasks, building on the common ground that forms the basis for our work.

Germany is deeply concerned about the continued use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. By acceding to the Chemical Weapons Convention all States Parties have agreed that no end can ever justify the use of chemical weapons. We rigorously condemn the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and we will continue to work towards the goal that those responsible will be held accountable.



As Member States of the OPCW, we all have to live up to our obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Syrian Arab Republic must really engage with the OPCW to provide all necessary information on all outstanding issues. We remain concerned about the number of gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration to the OPCW. They have increased over time and exist for a long time now. They still remain after the most recent talks, which took place from 16 to 18 September 2017. All the open questions have to be resolved.

We will thoroughly study the upcoming Joint Investigative Mission's (JIM) report on the use of sarin in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017 and the use of sulfur mustard in Um Housh in September 2016, both attacks confirmed in the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) reports. We support the FFM with its clear mandate. It has proved to be a trustworthy and highly professional instrument for investigations of alleged use. It is with great concern that we await the outstanding FFM report on the attack in the village of Al-Lataminah on 30 March 2017, where samples prove that sarin has been used. We are deeply convinced that the FFM has to continue its important work and that the JIM's mandate has to be prolonged immediately.

This is my first Executive Council session. I am truly baffled that the Syria file has kept the OPCW and this Executive Council so busy for so long with so little progress being made on so many open questions. This should be alarming to all nations represented here, particularly looking at the bigger picture. We are not dealing with a few technical issues in a declaration and isolated reports about alleged use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. What we are dealing with is a very serious combination of very grave concerns. What we are dealing with are insufficient and unconvincing explanations with regard to the capacities of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons programme in combination with the proven repeated and systematic use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Notwithstanding our grave concerns, we do have reason to express satisfaction. The Organisation has made important progress towards eliminating nearly all declared stockpiles of all the current 192 Member States, coming closer to our common goal of a world free of chemical weapons. The completion of the destruction of the remaining declared chemical weapons stockpiles of the Russian Federation in Kizner, which was achieved with the support of a number of States Parties, not least Germany, is a great achievement. The task of destroying and verifying the destruction of the Russian Federation's chemical weapons was indeed a challenging one.

We all can be proud that we have, with OPCW verification, destroyed more than 96 percent of all chemical weapons declared by possessor States. It was with good reason that the OPCW won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2013.

It is with satisfaction that Germany declares that the destruction of the remaining Libyan chemical weapons at the GEKA mbH facility in Germany will be completed within the time frame foreseen, by the beginning of December 2017. By achieving this important goal, Germany, together with other States Parties, has contributed significantly to freeing Libya of its remaining chemical weapons.

However, there is no cause for complacency. The challenges of our time will make it necessary for us to shift our focus from destruction and verification of destruction to preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons, including their use by non-State actors.

In this context, we look forward to the adoption of the draft decision on non-State actors, which will enable States Parties to tackle the mounting challenges in this field.

I welcome the useful work of the Future Priorities Working Group under the able Co-Chairpersons, the Ambassadors of Canada and South Africa, which forms the basis for the preparations for the next year's Review Conference 2018.

Finally, we welcome the draft for the programme and budget for 2018, which will allow the Organisation to execute its core tasks and activities and remain prepared amidst emerging challenges.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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