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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR A. V. SHULGIN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

The delegation of the Russian Federation has the honour of once again welcoming you at the head of the Executive Council and would like to assure you of our full support and readiness for constructive cooperation to ensure that this session is as productive as possible.

The Russian Federation is fully committed to its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. The completion of the destruction of the world's largest arsenal of this deadly type of weapon, the volume of which initially amounted to roughly 40,000 tonnes is evidence of this commitment. We were able to accomplish this three years ahead of the designated deadline. We would like to thank the delegation from the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the donor States for their participation in the commemorative events that took place on 27 September 2017 at the Kizner chemical weapons destruction facility (Udmurt Republic), at which, as per the instructions of the President of the Russian Federation, the last chemical munition from Russia's entire chemical weapons stockpile was destroyed.

Symbolically, the completion of the chemical demilitarisation of the Russian Federation coincided with the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the establishment of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We view the Convention as one of the most successful mechanisms in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. The Russian Federation was among the founders of this multi-lateral agreement the year it came into force. Since then, strict implementation of the obligations it undertook under international control became a key priority both for foreign policy, and for the Russian Government's political, financial, economic, and social strategies.

The path that our country has taken to the complete elimination of chemical weapons was not at all a simple one. We first had to overcome the complex conditions of the 1990's and early 2000's. Twice, we were forced to extend the deadline for the destruction of our chemical weapons stockpiles. As the infrastructure for the necessary facilities was put into place, there was a need to depend on international sources of financing in the form of pro bono technical aid from foreign States. We voice our gratitude to those donor States for their assistance, including: Belgium, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, France, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, and Sweden, as well as the European Union. The latter amounted to roughly RUB 32 billion, or approximately 10% of the total volume of



funds in the Russian Federation's federal budget, spent on directly tackling the destruction of chemical weapons, in addition to providing protection for both the public and the environment.

We are also grateful to the Secretariat and its management for the many years of close cooperation in the destruction of chemical arsenals. We look forward to continued productive cooperation on the wide range of issues on the OPCW's agenda.

Indeed, it is thanks to the traditional spirit of consensus and the non-politicised approach of the OPCW in tackling the work assigned to it by the international community that we successfully fulfilled our obligations to the international community. We view this as our shared success and a substantial contribution to strengthening peace, mutual understanding, and international security. As a result, we have been able to overcome the most important step on the road to our common goal: the comprehensive and effective prohibition of this class of weapons of mass destruction.

We continue to carefully follow the destruction of chemical weapons in other possessor States. We call upon these countries to do as much as possible to carry out the obligations they have undertaken in the soonest possible time and in strict compliance with the provisions of the Convention, and we call for those States who currently remain outside of the legal purview of the Convention to accede.

We are pleased to note the successful completion of the chemical demilitarisation of the Syrian Arab Republic in 2015. We are counting on the soonest possible verification by Secretariat experts of the destruction of the two remaining chemical weapons production facilities, access to which was previously not possible due to security conditions. We view the elimination of the Syrian military chemical potential as a strong and unprecedented example of the effectiveness of the Convention. The accomplishment of such a complex operation in wartime conditions was made possible thanks to the fervent dedication of the Syrian authorities to their deliberate political decision to abandon its military chemical programme.

We welcome the continuation of an active dialogue, including high-level discussions, between the Syrian National Authority for the implementation of the Convention and the Secretariat to clarify a number of remaining issues concerning Syria's initial declaration. We call upon the parties to continue the meticulous work on these clarifications in the constructive and non-politicised manner in which they began. At the same time, we would once again draw attention to the provisions of Article XI of the Convention stipulating the fundamental right of Syria as a State Party to the Convention to unhindered economic and technological development, as well as international cooperation within the chemical industry and technology for purposes not prohibited by the Convention.

The use of chemical weapons by anyone and under any circumstances is absolutely unacceptable. In this regard, the Russian Federation will continue to insist on conducting an objective, fair, and comprehensive international investigation both into the incidents involving the use of chemical weapons and into the delivery of toxic chemical agents to areas where military action is under way. This primarily concerns high-profile incidents, such as the use of sarin in the village of Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017. We expect the soonest possible completion of the work of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) investigating these types of cases based on a professional and non-politicised approach.

To those delegations that once again hasten to assume the roles of the judge and prosecution, we strongly recommend that a stop be put to the insinuations, as these undermine the Convention, which has clear-cut mechanisms for clarifying and regulating various types of concerns. We consistently condemn any measures taken to violate the universally recognised norms of international law, the Convention, and the Charter of the United Nations.

Unfortunately, the possession and use of chemical weapons by terrorist organisations is becoming one of the most serious challenges that the international community in general, and our Organisation in particular, has encountered in recent years. In this regard, we call upon the Secretariat to work more actively in this area with the involvement of the resources of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria and the Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM) that was established last year, while we also urge the Organisation itself to conduct a substantive discussion aimed at producing practical results within the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and its Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors. For several years now, the Russian Federation has been working with like-minded parties at all levels and at all relevant international organisations, primarily the United Nations Security Council, with an aim to draw attention to the need to counter this threat. In this regard, we are prepared to hold a constructive and broad discussion on this problem strictly within the framework of the Convention and the mandate of the OPCW.

We highly value the activity of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW. The Russian Federation is prepared to make a contribution to its work given that it is based exclusively on the principle of consensus and adherence to a carefully calibrated balance among the rights and responsibilities of States Parties, and that the results of its activities remain strictly within the boundaries of the key provisions of the Convention.

Right up until the opening of this Council session, the in-depth work that has been under way regarding a candidate for the post of the new Director-General of the OPCW Technical Secretariat has been based on a consensus. We recognise the important role played in this matter by Council Chairperson Mr Belal, who has led intensive consultations on this issue. We anticipate that a decision on this issue will be adopted at this Council session.

The Russian delegation will submit statements on other specific matters during discussions under the corresponding agenda item.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Eighty-Sixth Session of the Executive Council and published on the Organisation's website.

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