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BELGIUM

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN LEPAGE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BELGIUM TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Belgium fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Estonia on behalf of the European Union. I would nonetheless like to underscore the following four points:

Syria

My delegation is concerned by the lack of progress in this dossier since the Eighty-First Session of the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) and by the conclusions of the Director-General in his report EC-86/HP/DG.2 (dated 3 October 2017) on the work of the Declaration Assessment Team. Exemplary cooperation and progress are not limited to the mere sending letters or other documents or holding consultations. There still must be some substance, some added value, which allows for the effective resolution of the still too many outstanding issues. It is obvious that we are not yet at that stage.

My delegation fully agrees with what the Director-General said in his opening statement to the Eighty-Fifth Session of the Council, namely that:

- the continued use of chemical weapons in Syria must be strongly condemned;
- we must collectively ensure that the global norm that we have forged together is maintained and strengthened, which is possible only by holding to account those responsible for chemical attacks.

I should therefore like to reiterate that each State Party has a duty to defend the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”) and to ensure that it is correctly and fully implemented. Whoever violates the Convention is liable to punishment.

The delegation of Belgium has noted the Syrian Arab Republic’s request for assistance for the destruction of two chemical weapons production facilities and hopes that the Technical Secretariat’s initial inspections of these sites, at the end of this month or in early November,



may actually take place and be followed shortly thereafter by the destruction of those facilities.

Draft decision on the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons by non-state actors

I would recall that the delegation of Belgium supports this draft decision, which was originally proposed more than a year ago already. While everyone agrees that the risk of terrorism is real and that the development, production, acquisition, possession, stockpiling, retention, transfer, and use of chemical weapons by non-State actors threatens the object and purpose of the Convention as well as the achievement of a world free from chemical weapons, it is surprising and disappointing to see that this decision still has not been adopted. I cautiously hope that the recent efforts to achieve a consensus on the draft decision will be successful, if possible during this session of the Council.

Budget, review conferences, and future priorities

My delegation welcomes the agreement that was reached during facilitations on the Programme and Budget for 2018 and hopes that the Council will recommend to the Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter “the Conference”) the approval of this budget, which respects the principle of zero nominal growth in terms of States Parties’ mandatory contributions.

With regard to funding for review conferences, Belgium is of the opinion that such funding should not result in an increase in States Parties’ mandatory contributions. The proposal to set aside part of any budget surpluses to fund future review conferences is a good approach. This would effectively prevent the need to make a single call for significant contributions in the same year that a review conference is being held.

In future, we should think about the potential benefits of having a fixed budget for a two-year period. An in-depth study of this issue, in particular drawing on the experience of other organisations, may allow us to determine whether or not it will be possible to economise money, time, and personnel.

Appointment of the Director-General

Belgium is satisfied that a consensus has been reached with regard to the choice of the Director-General’s successor. It will therefore be recommended to the Conference that Mr Fernando Arias be appointed for a term of four years. In future, it would be desirable to supplement Rule 48 of the Rules of Procedure of the Council and Rule 82 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference to include a predictable, clear, and transparent process for the appointment of the Director-General.

I thank you and wish for this statement to be considered as an official document of this session of the Council.