

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Shujjat Ali Rathore,
Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the OPCW
at the 87th Session of the OPCW Executive Council
(13-16 March 2018)**

Mr. Chairman,

Since this is the first occasion on which I address the OPCW Executive Council as Pakistan's Permanent Representative, I will begin by reaffirming my delegations strong commitment to the goals of the Convention which this Council is charged to uphold, and of working closely with all my colleagues in the Council to achieve our common objectives. In welcoming you back in the Chair, I assure you of my delegations full cooperation.

Pakistan aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the States Parties belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

We thank the Director-General for his important statement, which as always, was comprehensive and will facilitate the consideration by the Council of items on its agenda.

The intersessional period has seen the commencement of the important work of the Open-ended Working Group to prepare for the Fourth Review Conference. Its Chairman has already demonstrated the leadership necessary to guide this work through to its successful conclusion.

Despite the few meetings that the OEWG has held so far, we have nonetheless been made aware of the challenges the Fourth Review Conference will encounter. While previous Review Conferences also faced some difficult issues, none took place in as challenging an environment. The long standing tradition of consensus which we all value so much is under strain. Consensus has enabled the success of three successive Review Conferences. We must all ensure that the outcome of the Fourth is no different.

This will however require delicate compromises without in any way eroding the authority of the Convention. There needs to be a strong reaffirmation of what has been roundly condemned by the international community – that is; any use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances. There also needs to be recognition of the hard work and

challenges the OPCW teams have faced in the performance of their mission to bring the facts to light even as differences persist as to how the Council should adjudge the conclusions.

It would be unfortunate if individual issues were to so overwhelm the proceedings that we lose the opportunity of decisions that have been made vital by the juncture at which the OPCW finds itself. For several years now the future of the Organisation in, what is described as the post destruction phase, has been debated and discussed. The Fourth Review Conference offers the platform to give shape to the constructive ideas and proposals and definitive endorsement of policies that will keep the Convention relevant and strong well into the future. In this regard, the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW would offer valuable inputs.

We all share a vision in which the Convention continues to remain a potent tool against chemical weapons, especially in an era of new threats and challenges. We look forward to a process in which we can focus our energies and efforts towards outcomes that are consistent with this vision. Meanwhile, it is important to maintain a steady pace towards the destruction of the remaining declared stockpiles of chemical weapons.

Developments in science and technology need close attention for these remain one of the key reasons why Review Conferences are held every five years. It is our hope that in the run up to the Conference, this subject will receive the attention that it merits through detailed briefings and opportunities for structured debate.

We have consistently stood for realising the full potential of Article XI of the Convention. As the OPCW enters a new era, the salience of Article XI is bound to increase further as it provides the bridge between international cooperation and its employment for purposes both of promoting technological cooperation as well as cooperative security. Enhanced international cooperation is vital to making the Organisation effective in such areas as counter-terrorism, enhancing chemical safety and security and broadening outreach and education.

A topic that will be of considerable interest is the work of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO). The latest report of the Board issued last month is a comprehensive and commendable effort. The report sheds light on ways and means to relate the general theory and practise of education and outreach to practical steps that will enable participation of various stakeholder communities as well as untapped audiences in the process

of strengthening the norms of the Convention. The report will be read with keen interest in our capital.

Mr Chairman,

OPCW's disarmament work in Syria testifies to the value and validity of the Convention and the commitment and dedication of those who performed their duties in the most challenging circumstances. Continuing reports of use of chemical weapons in Syria are a matter of serious concern and prolong the work of the Fact Finding Mission. In addition, a special mission had to be deployed last month at the request of the Syrian authorities to look into the information provided by them about items discovered by the Syrian armed forces. While we note the conclusions of the special mission, the report will be examined further in our capital.

We also note the latest report of the Declaration Assessment Team. The DAT has been engaged in Syria for almost three years now. It is our hope that this matter will soon be brought to an acceptable closure. Tasks related to the Convention and compliance with its provisions must not acquire an open-ended character for that cannot be regarded as an effective element in its operation.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman, I will once again assure you and the Council of our readiness to work closely with all delegations for the success of this session as well as other important undertakings this year.

Thank you