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GERMANY

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

Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General, distinguished colleagues,

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement by the European Union presented by the delegation of Bulgaria.

I would like to thank Director-General Üzümcü for his comprehensive statement and commend him and his professional staff in the Technical Secretariat for their hard work and great dedication in difficult times.

We strongly condemn the vicious attack with a military-grade nerve agent in Salisbury, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. We express our solidarity with the British Government that is leading the investigations thoroughly. We welcome the OPCW offer of support.

The Russian Federation, a fellow State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, must actively participate in immediate and full clarification. Those responsible must be held accountable.

Once again, this session of the Executive Council is taking place against the background of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. We are facing a very serious situation, in which fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic has included the use of chemical weapons for several years now. We think of the suffering Syrian population – men, women and children – who suffer bitterly from the fighting, and especially from the cruel, brutal and vicious use of chemical weapons.

In the framework of the OPCW we must do our utmost to bring the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic to an end. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic, a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, to fulfil its obligations under the Convention.

The starting point is obvious – the use of chemical weapons is prohibited under all circumstances, under all conditions and by anyone. There is absolutely no exception to this rule. We acknowledge that all parties to the Convention, including the Syrian Arab Republic, formally accept this principle as a basic rule.



At the same time, we have learned from the findings of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) that the Syrian Arab Republic used chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun in April 2017 and that the Syrian Arab Armed Forces have used chlorine as a chemical weapon in at least three cases. We are also deeply concerned about the continuing use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, including in Eastern Ghouta.

Continual new allegations regarding the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic make it urgent that the Fact-Finding Missions (FFM) continue their work to investigate these allegations. Germany follows the work of the FFM closely. We appreciate the professional and independent way the missions are conducted in full respect of their mandate. In this context, we express our full support for Director-General Üzümcü.

The use of chemical weapons is a crime under public international law. Germany feels that those responsible for these crimes must be held accountable. Anyone who uses chemical weapons – not only in the Syrian Arab Republic – must be held accountable. This is a deep conviction not only of the German Government, but also in German society. We firmly believe that no one who commits crimes that may amount to war crimes, such as the use of chemical weapons, should be able to get away with such crimes.

That is why we wholeheartedly subscribe to the joint declaration by a great number of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention seeking accountability for the use of chemical weapons, which H.E. French Ambassador Philippe Lalliot will present in the margins of this Executive Council. The establishment of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons supports all international efforts to end the use of chemical weapons and to hold those responsible for their use accountable. In this endeavour, the Partnership also fully supports the OPCW.

Germany is concerned about the fact that the Syrian Arab Republic has not met its obligations towards the OPCW concerning its Chemical Weapons Convention declaration sufficiently. The number of outstanding issues has not decreased, but rather increased since the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration in 2013. We appreciate the efforts by Director-General Üzümcü and the Technical Secretariat to continue the talks with the Syrian Arab Republic on this issue with the aim of resolving it as soon as possible. We also call on the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the OPCW in order to resolve the outstanding issues as quickly as possible.

In November 2017, Germany contributed more than EUR 700,000 towards the destruction of the last two declared chemical weapons production facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic. Linked to our contribution is the expectation that the Syrian Arab Republic will fully honour its obligations as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and will finally become a country free of chemical weapons.

As we advance towards the fourth Review Conference, Germany is convinced that the OPCW must be fit for future challenges. The OPCW has amply proven its ability to govern the most successful disarmament regime, with the verified destruction of almost 96% of declared chemical weapons. In this context, we welcome the information by Director-General Üzümcü of 28 February that Iraq has completed the destruction of its entire declared stockpile of chemical weapons remnants. This is another considerable achievement by the OPCW, following the completion of the destruction of Libyan chemical weapons remnants in November last year.

Dealing with the real and increasing threat posed by the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors is one of the most important challenges the OPCW and its States Parties are currently facing. It will be a crucial task for the Review Conference to address this issue effectively. Moreover, the struggle against the re-emergence of chemical weapons will be an essential task for the OPCW. It is important that we preserve and foster the Organisation's expertise in this regard.

Dialogue and cooperation with other international organisations and NGOs will need to be further developed. We will continue to play a constructive role in the relevant discussions in the Open-Ended Working Group under the able leadership of H.E. Ambassador Puja of Indonesia.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson

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