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FRANCE

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PHILIPPE LALLIOT
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General,
Distinguished Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen,

France aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union. I should like to add the following points in my national capacity.

I would first like to commend and thank you, Mr Chairperson. As this is your last regular session as Chairperson of the Executive Council, I should like to pay tribute to you for the work accomplished thus far and for guiding our work with both efficiency and good humour. Under your chairmanship, we have adopted a number of decisions that are important for the future of the OPCW, as well as a recommendation that resulted in the election of a new Director-General who, I am certain, knowing his great skill and expertise, both professionally and personally, will rise to the occasion like his predecessor.

Our Organisation is blessed to have such consummate professionals, particularly during this crucial period of challenges both in terms of transition and of opposition, not to say transgression.

Indeed, we must ensure continuity at the head of this Organisation, as we prepare for the Fourth Review Conference, which will allow us to draw lessons from the past five years, and to set a course for the next five to come. France is fully committed to these discussions and will continue to play its full part in them. The work is already well under way, first under the leadership of the Ambassadors of Canada and South Africa, whose commitment in identifying the future priorities of the OPCW is to be commended. That work now continues under the chairmanship of the Ambassador of Indonesia within the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fourth Review Conference.

Our responsibility is a collective one, since together we face repeated and proven cases of chemical weapons use, all of which are blatant violations of the commitments made and of the international norm against chemical weapons. It is a violation of the entire international system in the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and a serious threat to international peace and security.

In Syria, in Iraq, in Malaysia, and even most recently in the United Kingdom, international law has been violated, and we must assume our individual and collective responsibility. Here,



I should like to reiterate, as did the President of the Republic and the French Foreign Minister, France's full solidarity with the United Kingdom, which in turn has just suffered an unacceptable attack on its national territory. We condemn this attack in the strongest possible terms and pledge our full support to the British authorities. We should like to thank the United Kingdom for the information it shared with the Council this morning and to commend its willingness to work with the OPCW.

Are we going to allow the use of chemical weapons to undermine our efforts to rid the world of these heinous weapons? France refuses to accept this. We will not accept fatalism, neither will we accept apathy, let alone any actions aimed at weakening the institutions that have we spent so many years building together.

We must on the contrary strengthen the existing institutions: by giving the OPCW the means to match our ambitions, starting with a clear and precise road map, and by giving it the resources that will allow it to become the best instrument in the fight against the re-emergence and use of chemical weapons, just as it has been over the last 20 years in the destruction of declared stockpiles. You can rely on France's commitment and proposals in this area.

The OPCW so far has been able to deal with these issues thanks to the commitment of its Director-General and to the professionalism of all the staff of the Technical Secretariat, to whom I wish to pay tribute here. It is up to us to support and cooperate closely with them, of course in the interest of the Organisation, but also in our own interest, for the safety of our citizens.

If we wish to fight effectively against the use of chemical weapons, we must ensure that the OPCW will continue to be able to investigate and speak out on any allegations of use that come before it.

It is for this reason that France, which is concerned about the disappearance of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), decided to take action with many of its partners in order to fight against impunity.

On 23 January 2018, with the Director-General in attendance, the French Foreign Minister launched an initiative in Paris—the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. Twenty-four countries, as well as regional and international organisations, chose to sign up for the Partnership, and we thank them. Since then, others have expressed their interest in this global and open partnership, with universal geographical scope, whose purpose is to ensure that evidence gathered by any stakeholders can be shared and preserved in order that all actors, persons, and entities identified for their involvement in the perpetuation of these heinous acts know that, when the time comes, they will be prosecuted and held accountable for their actions.

The fight against impunity begins with the establishment of facts in cases of allegations of chemical attacks. This is precisely the role of the OPCW today. This role has been entrusted to it and confirmed on several occasions by the international community, by us, the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Partnership exists to reinforce the OPCW and other bodies tasked with dealing with these issues. In this context, France will give a presentation on the Partnership during an event in the margins of this session of the Council, on Thursday at 13:00 in the Ooms room.

France makes no distinction between the different actors who use chemical weapons to spread terror and death. France is viscerally attached to the system of non-proliferation that guarantees our peace and security, and to the measures we must adopt collectively to reinforce that peace and security. France is viscerally attached to the system of international criminal justice, before which those who commit such crimes must be held accountable. To do nothing is already a form of complicity, to refrain from doing anything, a compromise of principle. We cannot resign ourselves to that. We owe this to the victims, to the peoples we represent here, and to the future generations.

Thank you.

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