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ITALY

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ANDREA PERUGINI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ITALY TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General, distinguished delegates,

I would like to express my country's gratitude to the Director-General, for his comprehensive report delivered in this session of the Executive Council. Italy is pleased to reiterate its appreciation for the OPCW staff's commitment to the mandate of the Organisation.

Furthermore, Italy fully supports the statement provided on behalf of the European Union by Ambassador Krassimir Kostov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The OPCW oversees the global endeavour to permanently eliminate chemical weapons and, since the Chemical Weapons Convention's entry into force, in 1997, as underlined several times, is the most successful disarmament treaty eliminating an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. The announcements by the Russian Federation, Libya and Iraq of the completion of destruction of their remaining declared chemical weapons stockpiles represent important milestones towards a world completely free from chemical weapons.

The Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties will be convened this year to undertake reviews of the operation of the Convention. Such reviews are also aimed at taking into account any new relevant scientific and technological developments. This is because the elimination of all chemical weapons will mark the transition of the Organisation from an era when the destruction of chemical stocks was a priority into a context stressed by the emergence of new global challenges, such as the introduction of new chemicals, the application of new technologies, the threat posed by the use of toxic chemicals by non-State actors, and, last but not least, chemical terrorism.

Italy is deeply concerned about the reported use of a nerve agent in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland that again shows that reality goes well beyond imagination. We are also deeply concerned about the use of the agent VX at Kuala Lumpur's civil airport and, we express our strong conviction that no effort should be spared to identify and hold accountable those involved in the use of chemical weapons.

With regard to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, let me add a few remarks to the concerns I have already expressed in several Executive Council sessions.



At the outset, the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and Italy considers that over the last years the repeated violations of the Convention by State and non-State actors alike risk undermining the progress achieved in enforcing the elimination of such kind of weapons of mass destruction. We all have a common responsibility to reverse this trend, prevent further use and ensure accountability of the perpetrators.

In this respect, Italy fully supports the efforts of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), especially in view of the large number of alleged incidents reported.

We indeed believe that, in order to prevent further use of chemical weapons, it is crucial to continue to identify to the greatest extent feasible individuals, entities, groups, or government authorities who were perpetrators, organisers, sponsors or otherwise involved in the use of chemical weapons. In this respect, the FFM is the most effective, efficient and appropriate tool to assess facts in an independent and impartial way.

The need to seek explicit attribution of responsibility for the use of chemical weapons by a State Party of the Convention obliges delegations to cooperate with each other and act responsibly. Inaction would substantially weaken the international norm against the use of chemical weapons. In this regard, Italy welcomes and subscribes to the joint initiative for an “International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons”, which aims at supporting and complementing the relevant multilateral mechanisms.

Consequently, we expect the Director-General to continue to preserve and provide all relevant information to assist any pertinent investigatory mechanism.

As States Parties, we share the common obligation to protect the future credibility and effectiveness of the regime of non-proliferation of chemical weapons. For all these reasons we reiterate our call on the Syrian Arab Republic to provide full transparency and unconditional cooperation to the OPCW.

With reference to the last OPCW Declaration Assessment Team’s report, it continues to be absolutely unacceptable that, despite the efforts of the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat, it is still not possible today to confirm with certainty that the Syrian Arab Republic’s chemical weapons programme has been completely dismantled, and the subsequent threat eliminated. We request the Syrian authorities to change their attitude, to provide, without further delay, a comprehensive and complete declaration of their chemical weapons programme, filling all gaps and pending inconsistencies in their initial and subsequent declarations, and to fully cooperate as required by the relevant decisions of the Executive Council, as well as by United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). The Syrian dossier will remain a priority for the Executive Council until the international community is confident that the Syrian Arab Republic is free of all chemical weapons and fully committed to the provisions of the Convention. We expect the Syrian Arab Republic to comply with all Executive Council’s decisions and call for the expeditious resolution of all pending issues and uncertainties regarding the elimination of its chemical weapons programme.

Italy considers that, in addition to the destruction, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, of all Syrian chemical weapons as well as sites, laboratories and all related structures involved in the production of such weapons, the reconversion of the experts and technical staff involved in the Syrian chemical weapons programme should also be considered, based on previous lessons learned.

Let me now turn to other important issues.

With regard to the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors, it is paramount to reinforce the provisions and obligations of the Convention by strengthening proper implementation. Without domestic penal legislation, national civil and military codes, and appropriate customs regulations related to the Convention, compliance will suffer. The full implementation of Article VII in particular, constitutes a tangible contribution to global security and to the strengthening of the effectiveness of the chemical non-proliferation regime.

It is regrettable that, after two decades, despite considerable efforts by the Technical Secretariat, out of a total of 192 States Parties, 31 still have legislation covering only partially the initial measures while 39 have yet to adopt any kind of legislation at all in accordance with the obligations of the Convention. This should be a matter of concern to all of us as it introduces an element of weakness in the non-proliferation regime, impacting also on other Articles of the Convention. Thus, the Fourth Review Conference should concretely act and promote progress on this topic, with the support of all States Parties.

Italy will contribute to the next relevant discussions of the dedicated Open-Ended Working Group under the capable leadership of Ambassador Puja of Indonesia. In the same vein, we wish to express our appreciation for the work carried out by the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities and we hope the final outcome of the Review Conference will take the Article VII issue into due consideration.

Considering the importance of the provisions of Article X of the Convention, Italy participated actively in several initiatives and activities promoted by the Technical Secretariat, namely by supporting the Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM). In this regard, we are pleased to report that we are continuing our discussion with the Technical Secretariat to define the operational arrangements on aircraft services to be made available by Italy, with the purpose of ensuring that the OPCW is able to rely on additional capabilities.

Finally, the cooperation with other relevant international organizations and agencies remains a pillar for the future activities of the Convention as well as the engagement and cooperation with the chemical industry, academia and civil society, as leading players in the development of a safe and secure chemistry.

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