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**STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AT ITS THIRTY-SIXTH MEETING
17 DECEMBER 2013**

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I welcome you to the Thirty-Sixth Meeting of the Executive Council.

When the Council adopted its decision EC-M-34/DEC.1 on 15 November 2013, endorsing the removal of chemical weapons from the Syrian Arab Republic for the purpose of destruction outside its territory, this was approval of an extraordinary measure necessitated by extraordinary circumstances.

The Council had asked me to present a plan for the destruction of chemical weapons outside the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic after consultations with States Parties offering to host a destruction facility or otherwise providing assistance with transport or destruction.

It gives me great satisfaction to report to you that, within a month's time, the major elements of such a transportation and destruction plan are in place.

My Note EC-M-36/DG.3 (dated 15 December 2013), which is before the Council, outlines the effort that will now be undertaken to implement the various facets of the plan to destroy Syrian chemical weapons outside its territory.

The highlights of the plan are the decisions of a number of States Parties to provide crucial and substantial assistance. As I announced in my statement to the Council on 29 November, the United States of America will provide facilities necessary to neutralise the priority chemicals on board one of its vessels at sea.

Denmark and Norway will provide vessels and military escorts for the maritime transportation of the Syrian chemicals, and subsequently for the transportation of chemicals that are to be disposed of at commercial facilities. Finland has offered chemical weapons emergency-response capabilities. Italy has decided to offer a port for the transloading of the priority chemicals from the Danish-Norwegian vessel to the United States ship.

For the transportation of chemicals from the storage sites to the port of Latakia, States Parties have similarly provided or committed essential materials and equipment. Apart from supplying nearly 3000 container drums of various capacities, the United States of America is



providing GPS¹ locators, loading, transportation, and decontamination equipment. The Russian Federation is providing large capacity and armoured trucks, water tanks, and other logistical supplies. It has also indicated the possibility of further monetary or material assistance, as well as security for cargo operations at the port and in Syrian territorial waters. China is providing surveillance cameras and 10 ambulances. Once again, these contributions are specific to the transportation and destruction of Syrian chemical weapons outside its territory.

The Syrian Arab Republic has formulated a plan for the transportation of the chemicals from the 12 storage sites to the port of Latakia, where these will be loaded onto the maritime vessels. It will also implement a security and safety plan during movement of materials within the Syrian Arab Republic.

In accordance with the separation of obligations at various stages of the transportation and destruction process, as established in the decision of the Executive Council adopted on 15 November, the Syrian Arab Republic will be responsible for all the packing and safe transportation of chemicals until they are loaded onto the maritime vessels.

In making their offers for maritime transportation and transfer, the assisting States Parties have, in the interest of the common good, assumed onerous responsibilities. The Joint Mission will facilitate and coordinate the arrangements necessary for their contributions to materialise through the necessary assurances and arrangements for security, protection, access, and privileges and immunities.

This joint endeavour clearly bears the sanction of both the Executive Council of the OPCW and the Security Council of the United Nations. The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the Security Council have exchanged communications that serve to affirm its multilateral character.

As regards disposal of chemicals at commercial facilities, the Secretariat has separately issued a note yesterday (EC-M-36/DG.4), which explains the process that will lead to the selection of commercial entities. The solicitation process will involve commercial as well as technical evaluation of proposals within an expedited schedule that nonetheless retains the fundamental and essential characteristics of open, transparent, and competitive bidding.

On the basis of recent receipts of funds and pledges for the Syria Trust Fund for the Destruction of Chemical Weapons, I have decided to initiate the tendering process on 19 December. The balance in the trust fund currently stands at EUR 9.8 million. Contributions were received from the Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Turkey, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This includes such contributions that had originally been made to the first OPCW Trust Fund for Syria and have subsequently been transferred, in part or in their entirety, to the Special Trust Fund for Destruction. Formal commitments have been made by a further two States Parties, Finland and the Republic of Korea, amounting to approximately EUR 750.000. The Japanese Government has decided, subject to parliamentary approval, to contribute an amount of nearly USD 15 million, which will be shared between the OPCW and the United Nations.

¹ GPS = Global Positioning System.

Given the significant amounts that will be needed, I call on all States Parties to urgently consider contributing to the special trust fund to support the successful completion of this major task that lies ahead of us.

The key features of the destruction plan that I have highlighted and which are detailed in my aforementioned Note are all very positive developments. We must, however remember that the mission in the Syrian Arab Republic is making progress against heavy odds. A massive procurement effort has gone into the collection and delivery of materials and equipment. At times, schedules have been disrupted by a combination of security concerns, clearance procedures in international transit and even inclement weather conditions. These circumstances which have been beyond the control of the assisting States Parties, the Joint Mission, and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, have, however, added pressures to the time frames. The continuing heavy fighting in the Qalamoun and surrounding areas and the closure of a major arterial road between Damascus and Homs, pose risks to the timely execution of the operation.

The possibility of some delays cannot be discounted. The Joint Mission is working closely and intensively with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the assisting States Parties in order to commence removal and transportation operations, beginning with the removal of the priority chemicals from the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic at the turn of the year. I will keep the Council informed of the progress and, in accordance with its previous decision (EC-M-34/DEC.1), will promptly communicate any problems that impact the given timelines.

Given the highly sensitive nature of the information that will be generated in the course of the implementation of the removal and destruction plan, I will urge all to exercise utmost caution and care in handling such information. The safety and security of the personnel as well as of the materials in transport, will depend on such confidence. I will at the same time also underscore that we are all bound to respect the confidentiality of the information that falls under the OPCW regime on confidentiality.

In conclusion, Mr Chairperson, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the States Parties that have decided to assist in this challenging undertaking by offering destruction facilities, by transporting chemicals from Syria, by providing material assistance, and by making important financial contributions to the Special Trust Fund. It would have been difficult a month ago to predict the availability of the assets that are now in place or will soon be. The resolve and commitment of our States Parties have created the conditions in which we can feel confident in implementing the far-reaching decisions of the Executive Council and the Security Council of the United Nations.

I thank you.