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NETHERLANDS

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JAN-LUCAS VAN HOORN PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NETHERLANDS TO THE OPCW AT THE FIFTIETH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mr Chairman,

These comments on a national basis are in addition to the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union, with which my delegation associates itself.

My intervention shall be brief, as it shall be limited to the latest three reports of the Fact-Finding Mission established by the Director-General, which form the focus of this meeting. Further observations are reserved for the Conference of the States Parties next week.

I thank the Director-General for his statement. I wish to start my intervention by expressing my delegation's deep appreciation for the dedication and professionalism with which the members of the various FFM teams are performing their tasks. Their commitment is not to be taken for granted and deserves all our respect.

All delegations taking the floor today are expressing their concern about the fact that chemical weapons have been used, again. My delegation shares that concern. As stated before, the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances is a violation of international law. The conclusion of the Fact-Finding Mission that people have been exposed to sulfur mustard is shocking. The use of mustard gas sets us back one hundred years and must not remain without consequences.

We are equally concerned about the other reported incidents of the use of toxic chemicals, even more so because it is becoming increasingly clear that we are not faced with incidental use of toxic chemicals as a weapon. What we are seeing from one of the FFM reports on our agenda today, and also from the earlier findings of the FFM, is a pattern of deliberate, conscious attacks using toxic chemicals. The previous reports of the FFM confirmed more than a year ago that a toxic chemical was used as a weapon systematically and repeatedly. It is unacceptable that the situation has not changed since then and that this blatant violation of the Convention and of international law is continuing.

There can be no doubt that those responsible must – and will – be held to account for their deeds. In this regard we welcome the information that the Joint Investigative Mechanism established by Security Council resolution 2235 (2015) has started its operations. The



identification of the perpetrators by the JIM will have to be a further step towards full accountability.

I take the opportunity to inform the Council that the Netherlands has decided to contribute EUR 250.000 towards the operational costs of the Joint Investigative Mechanism.

As I have said, the use of chemical weapons must not remain without consequences. This Council should take the first step by condemning in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstances. My delegation therefore supports the draft-decision entitled “Further Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria”.

Thank you.

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