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AUSTRALIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR NEIL MULES
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE OPCW AT THE
SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairman,

Australia was honoured to address the October high-level meeting in New York which commemorated the 15th anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We take pride in the fact that over 75% of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles have been destroyed, and the remainder are secured until destruction. The achievements of the Chemical Weapons Convention are outstanding. But we must not become complacent. We must ensure that the Convention and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) continue to play a strong role in global security. We urge chemical weapon Possessor States to continue their hard work to complete destruction of their remaining stockpiles in the shortest possible timeframes.

Australia's steadfast commitment to the Convention and to its full and effective implementation remains undiminished. Australia is actively engaged in encouraging the small number of States still remaining outside the Convention to join the Convention at the earliest possible time. Australia reinforced this commitment to Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü during his visit to Australia in July 2012 and we stand ready to support those countries in helping them achieve this goal.

Similarly, effective implementation is equally crucial and we must continue to strive to ensure that all parties enact robust domestic legislation and establish strong national authorities. National Authorities, customs authorities and other agencies can all contribute to ensuring that declarations and OPCW inspections, performed under the verification regime, build confidence internationally that new chemical weapons are not being developed.

It concerns me to refer to Syria's admission that it has chemical weapons which it might use against external aggressors. We unreservedly join with others who have condemned the possible use of chemical weapons by anyone, including by States not yet party to the Convention, and call for Syria's chemical weapons stocks to be secured pending destruction and never used under any circumstances.

Australia welcomed the early agreement on the OPCW's 2013 Programme and Budget. We commend the Director-General for achieving a modest budget reduction and support efforts to achieve efficiencies, especially at this time of global financial constraints, whilst ensuring that the OPCW's core functions, including effective verification, are not adversely affected.



Australia strongly supports efforts to minimise costs associated with Article VI inspections. Australia volunteered to trial sequential Schedule 3 inspections in the late 1990s and has been receiving sequential inspections of different facility types ever since. We strongly support the recent industry cluster considerations for sequential inspections at mixed facilities. This will increase efficiency and further reduce costs. We encourage all States Parties, who have not yet done so, to notify the OPCW of their acceptance of sequential inspections.

We also welcome efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the OPCW's policy-making organs. While some progress has been made, we believe that there is scope for further reform. As a young organisation the OPCW has the opportunity to set the benchmark in best practice for other international organisations to follow.

The Convention remains the vital pillar of our efforts to ban chemical weapons globally and forever—it has served us well to date, but it is time to take stock of how best we go forward. As the Third Review Conference approaches, Australia will continue to contribute to the deliberations of the open-ended working group which will be focussing on the Review Conference outcomes document. We encourage all States Parties to participate actively in these discussions as a forum for reviewing the effectiveness of past operations and in agreeing priorities for the future. States Parties must decide collectively how to ensure that high ambitions of the Convention continue to be pursued beyond the destruction of all chemical weapons.

In looking ahead, Australia has identified four key areas of focus to ensure that chemical weapons do not re-emerge:

1. Enhanced verification of other chemical production facilities, taking into account relevant advances in science, technology and industry operations;
2. Promoting full and effective national implementation of Articles VI and VII, including through enhanced education and outreach to research institutions and industry to help prevent chemicals from being diverted for non-peaceful purposes;
3. Development of chemical security strategies to prevent the deliberate release of toxic chemicals by non-State actors; and
4. Support in assistance and capacity building for protection against chemical weapons, including against the deliberate release of toxic industrial chemicals.

It is vital that the OPCW is adequately resourced with appropriate access to experts, as well as on-going training and equipment, to enhance its preparedness to conduct verifications activities. This includes challenge inspections and investigations of alleged use of chemical weapons. After all, there is no other international organisation in possession of expert knowledge and relevant experience in this field and we need to ensure that the OPCW maintains this essential capability.

I wish you well in your important task in presiding over this session of the Conference and pledge the full support of Australia's delegation as we work towards the total elimination of chemical weapons.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.