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SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

**STATEMENT BY DR FAISAL MEKIDAD, VICE-MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND EXPATRIATES OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC AT THE
NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Madam Chairperson,

At the outset, I should like to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson for the current session of the Conference of the States Parties. We are confident that your experience and wisdom will enable you to steer the deliberations of this Conference with success. We are ready to cooperate fully with you for the success of your mission. We also should like to thank your predecessor Ambassador Sa'ad Abdul Majeed Ibrahim Al-Ali and the sisterly nation of Iraq, and to express to him our appreciation for his efforts in chairing the deliberations of the last session of the Conference.

I would be remiss if I did not also thank Mr Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Technical Secretariat team, and express to them our appreciation for their efforts in the excellent preparation for this Conference and its documents, and for their enormous endeavours during this elapsing year, which has been an exceptional one in the history of the OPCW.

The delegation of my country aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Convention and China.

This is the second session of the Conference attended by the Syrian Arab Republic since its historic decision to accede to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. We are attending this Conference after the conclusion of the exceptional efforts made for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, including a vast and key undertaking unprecedented in the history of this Organisation and unparalleled by any other State Party, which is a joint success achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW. This has been possible in spite of past and present difficult circumstances in my country and of its having to fight a vicious terrorist onslaught by terror groups and regional and international forces against the Syrian nation and people.

Firm political guidance by the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr Bashar Al-Assad, and the enormous efforts put by the relevant Syrian authorities have been key in completing



this work, which has deservedly been the object of praise by the Technical Secretariat and the Joint Mission throughout the various phases of this operation, and is indisputable proof of the implementation by the Syrian Arab Republic of its international obligations, and anything that it pledges to undertake, in an earnest and responsible manner.

Since its accession to the Convention and to the present day, the Syrian Arab Republic have been committed to extending all forms of cooperation, as required, and has acted in a positive and transparent manner to implement its obligations under the Convention and the decisions of the Executive Council of the OPCW. The flexibility shown by my country's Government at different levels and in all areas, was conducive to reaching sensible and realistic solutions that have enabled it to continue implementing the tasks required from it as a State Party to the Convention. This was done in spite of enormous challenges and a complex and difficult security situation caused by the hostile behaviour of some regional and international parties, either through their leaking of confidential and sensitive information or through their support to armed terrorist groups that have targeted chemical sites and convoys, thus causing the death of a number of martyrs who made the ultimate sacrifice for the success of this operation.

The remaining technical aspects in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme are much less than those remaining for the implementation of their obligations by States Parties that have been members of the OPCW for years. This lays bare the attempts by those hostile to the Syrian Arab Republic to use the technical nature of the remaining activities for political purposes. In this regard, the Syrian Arab Republic takes this opportunity to express its gratitude to all States Parties that have rejected the blackmail and surrender approach, stood firm against all attempts at controlling the work of international organisations and foiled all attempts to use this Organisation for advancing hostile political agendas that do not serve peace, stability or security in the Syrian Arab Republic, in the region or in the world at large.

Since the beginning of the operation of the elimination of the Syrian chemical programme, the Syrian Arab Republic has repeatedly stressed that it would not be able to bear any of the costs for this operation, including verification and inspection costs, due to its current difficult economic circumstances and the priority it has given to satisfying the basic humanitarian needs of its nationals, in addition to the impact of the unjust economic sanctions imposed on it. In this regard, we should like to express our appreciation for the support provided by States Parties, which was central in accomplishments during the past period. We urge the Director-General to continue encouraging States Parties to maintain this support which is necessary to complete the remaining work. I wish we had heard from the European Union Representative that the European Union had made a decision to lift the inhuman economic sanctions that has caused the deaths of large numbers of children and innocent people in the Syrian Arab Republic, instead of requesting that frozen Syrian funds be used for making payments that will only result in further suffering for Syrian children and for the Syrian people who are waging a war against terror, murder and destruction at the hands of ISIS, Al-Nusra Front and other Al-Qaeda affiliated groups.

Some regional and international parties have attempted to level false, uncorroborated accusations, as part of an unjust and hostile campaign against the Syrian Arab Republic, in order to divert the attention of the international community from the success of the Syrian Arab Republic in the implementation of its obligations, and attempt to end the important accomplishments of the Syrian Arab Army in its fight against armed terrorist groups in

several regions in the Syrian Arab Republic. This is what led these parties to make their false allegations that chlorine gas could have been used by the Syrian Government as a chemical weapon in military operations.

While reiterating its condemnation of the use by anyone, anywhere, of chemical weapons or any other weapons of mass destruction, the Syrian Arab Republic categorically denies that it has ever used chlorine gas or any other toxic materials in any incidents or operations in the Syrian Arab Republic since the beginning of the crisis until this very day, and strongly proclaims that it will never do so in the future. The Syrian Arab Republic has shown its readiness to cooperate, and keep on cooperating, with the Fact-Finding Mission concerning those allegations.

Some States are disposed to lend credence to scenarios made up in advance by armed terrorist groups in order to accuse the Syrian State without any evidence. We recall that regions in the Syrian Arab Republic where chlorine gas has been used are under the control of armed terrorist groups, and that these do not lack the capacity to fabricate allegations. But we do not want governments to be inclined to believe terrorists' allegations.

The Syrian Arab Republic has warned more than once against the possibility that regional or international parties plotting against the Syrian Arab Republic provide armed terrorist groups with chemical weapons to be used against the Syrian people, in order to accuse the Syrian Government of such use. The policy of those parties has been exposed, as they kept silent as the graves on the real use of chlorine gas in several locations in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq by terrorist groups, and, in particular, ISIS and Al-Nusra Front, as part of their indiscriminate terrorist crimes in both countries.

The undue exploitation of a status report of the Fact-Finding Mission, lacking professionalism and objectivity and containing no conclusive findings, a report which has led to comments on the work methodology and conclusions of the Mission and on which no position can be based, is yet another proof of the hostile political agendas pursued by these parties.

With respect to other Convention-related issues, the Syrian Arab Republic emphasises that the completion of destruction by all possessor States of their chemical weapons arsenals, including old and abandoned chemical weapons, remains a major pillar of the Convention. Therefore, the Syrian Arab Republic calls upon all concerned states to implement their obligations and complete the destruction of all these weapons as early as possible. In this regard, the Syrian Arab Republic welcomes the decision of the Russian Federation to complete the implementation of its obligations to destroy its chemical stockpile by 2020.

The Syrian Arab Republic looks forward to the consultations continuing between all delegations on the earliest possible implementation of Article XI, concerning economic and technological development, in order to hold further discussions on the informal document prepared by the facilitator, which contains elements from the Action Plan that the Group of the Non-Aligned Movement and China had submitted to the Third Review Conference, the relevant decision of the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and the recommendations of the Third Review Conference, in order to achieve the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all the provisions of this article.

With regard to the implementation of Article VII, concerning national implementation measures, the Syrian Arab Republic calls on Member States to maintain their technical support and assistance to States Parties upon demand, to ensure that solutions are found to practical difficulties encountered by, and paucity of resources available to, States Parties in adopting national implementation measures.

The Syrian Arab Republic welcomes the continuing implementation of the Africa Programme and subscribes to the idea of developing new projects to strengthen and enhance this programme.

The Syrian Arab Republic emphasises the importance of appointing Technical Secretariat staff based on standards of competence and integrity, and with due regard to equitable geographical distribution.

Achieving the universality of the Convention remains a core objective of the States Parties that contributes to promoting regional and global peace and security. In this regard, the Syrian Arab Republic encourages the Technical Secretariat and the States Parties to redouble their efforts to achieve the universality of the Convention, and underscores at the same time that States remaining outside the Convention have the right to none of the benefits that it brings to States Parties thereto. Disposing of all weapons of mass destruction and preventing terrorist groups from obtaining and using such weapons is a collective endeavour that must be tackled in an earnest and responsible manner, particularly in the Middle East. In this regard, the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic is of the view that the international community must act to make the Middle East region a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. This cannot be accomplished as long as Israel, the only party in the region that has not acceded to any of the international conventions on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, has not been compelled to adhere thereto. And I wish to recall that, during its term as member of the Security Council in 2003, the Syrian Arab Republic has tabled a draft resolution for making the Middle East region a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. Everyone knows which States have hampered that initiative, applying a notorious double standards policy, for the sole purpose not to put Israel, which would have had to be included in such a zone, in an uncomfortable position.

In conclusion, I should like to stress once again that the Syrian Arab Republic is committed to completing the implementation of its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and the relevant decisions of the Executive Council and maintaining its cooperation with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW. We reiterate our appreciation for the efforts put in by the Technical Secretariat under the leadership of the Director-General in order to complete this joint historic mission.

Finally, the delegation of my country wishes success for this Conference, and I request that this statement be considered as an official document of the Conference.

I thank you.