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TURKEY

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MR SADIK ARSLAN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY TO THE OPCW AT THE
NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Madam Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished Representatives,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me a distinct pleasure to address the Conference of the States Parties of the OPCW at its auspicious annual event.

Seizing this opportunity, allow me to congratulate you Madam Chairperson, Ambassador Vesela Mrđen Korać of Croatia, on your election to the Chair of this Conference. I have no doubt that under your able leadership and Director-General Üzümcü's excellent guidance, we, the States Parties, will yet again take up critical issues for furthering our aim of creating a world completely free from chemical weapons.

I also would like to commend Ambassador Dr Sa'ad Abdul Majeed Ibrahim Al-Ali of Iraq as the outgoing Chairperson, for his contributions to the success of the Eighteenth Conference of the States Parties held last year as well as to the work of the OPCW since the previous Conference.

Since the adoption of the Executive Council decision on the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons last year, OPCW oversaw unprecedented events in its history.

The process for the removal of chemical weapons outside Syria had been a daunting task and a great responsibility for the OPCW-UN Joint Mission to save more lives in Syria and reduce the threats to the peace and stability in the region to an extent.

On this occasion, I would like to thank, once again Mr Director-General and his dedicated team, for their efforts in achieving a significant stage with the shipment of the last chemicals by 23 June 2014.

Undoubtedly, Ms Sigrid Kaag, Special Coordinator for the Joint Mission, whose mandate came to an end on 30 September 2014 and other States Parties have actively contributed in this process and also deserve our heartfelt appreciation.

Despite these achievements, it is quite clear that the task of complete elimination of Syrian chemical weapons is far from over.



What we need to take into account is that, despite Syria's accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention more than a year ago, civilians are still being systematically killed or wounded by the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime.

Fresh reports still keep coming in this regard. The regime did not put any stop, in the last month, to its continued use of chlorine gas as a chemical weapon mostly through barrel bombs dropped by its helicopters. Unfortunately, the international community has chosen to remain silent while hundreds of civilians are dying as a result of these attacks.

Turkey firmly supports the continuation of the work of the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission to put the regime's continuous violations on record and bring them to the attention of the international community.

In the face of continuous use of chemicals in Syria, Turkey believes the States Parties must act in unity.

The use of chemical weapons by any party, whether a State or a non-state actor, does not only constitute a breach of basic norms of international law, but also is a serious crime against humanity whose perpetrators must be held accountable.

With this in mind, we, as the States Parties of this very Organisation, must be on the right side of history and fulfil our responsibilities.

In this respect, we need to face the harsh reality that the Chemical Weapons Convention is constantly being undermined by the use of chemicals in Syria by the Assad regime's forces. Inaction in view of these flagrant violations of the Executive Council decisions as well as the United Nations Security Council resolution of 2118 (2013), put the whole Chemical Weapons Convention regime at risk.

Remaining paralysed to the credible evidence on the persistent use of chemicals in Syria, as substantiated by the Fact-Finding Mission, will eventually lead to the questioning of the relevance of this Organisation. Clearly, we should act in unity and with one voice to avoid such an outcome.

Turkey also shares the serious concerns regarding gaps, discrepancies and inconsistencies in Syria's declarations on its chemical weapons stocks.

While we highly appreciate the fact that the Technical Secretariat's Declaration Assessment Team has made significant efforts to clarify questions on the Syrian chemical weapons programme, we face a situation where every visit of the Team to Damascus raises new questions on the accuracy and integrity of the Syrian declarations.

Given the fact that the Technical Secretariat is spending serious time as well as allocating human and financial resources to address these questions, we hope to see some substantial progress as a result of this exercise. Suggestion of a chemical weapons programme without documentation, is simply far-fetched and beyond the pale.

The fact that yet another deadline has been missed in November with respect to the commencement of the destruction of twelve chemical weapons production facilities in Syria,

is a stark reminder that there is no room for complacency when it comes to Syria's promises to fulfil its obligations.

These experiences constitute compelling reasons as to why the Organisation needs to continue to closely and regularly monitor the process of elimination of Syrian chemical weapons in the coming year as well.

Awarding of the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize to the OPCW has been a profound recognition of the Organisation's achievements in the field of chemical disarmament. Let us not forget that this is also a recognition of trust bestowed upon OPCW's future endeavours.

Next year, we will commemorate the centenary of the first comprehensive use of chemical weapons in history. I believe we need to draw significant lessons from past grievances to prevent their recurrence in the future.

With this understanding, Turkey attributes utmost significance to the universalisation of the Convention and we are ready to provide any assistance to achieve this end.

On this occasion, we once again call upon those States not Party to the Convention to do so without further delay. We believe joining of those remaining countries to the Chemical Weapons Convention regime would bolster the efforts in other disarmament fields, namely the nuclear disarmament initiatives.

Last but not least, I wish to congratulate Dr Robert Mathews of Australia and the Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention/VERIFIN, as the joint recipients of the inaugural OPCW-The Hague Award.

Obviously, this award will not only spread the message about the mission and vision of the OPCW but will also provide an important incentive for furthering the objectives of the Convention.

Before I conclude, I would like to request that this statement be treated as an official document of this session of the Conference and be posted on the external server and the website.

Thank you.

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