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NEW ZEALAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JANET LOWE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE OPCW AT THE
NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Thank you Madam Chair.

New Zealand joins others in congratulating you on your appointment as Chair of the Nineteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

2014 has been another important year for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In particular, this past year saw important progress in the removal and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons programme.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge, on behalf of the New Zealand Government, all those who have been involved in this process: the Director-General of the OPCW and the staff of the Technical Secretariat, the Special Coordinator Ms Sigrid Kaag and the OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria. We thank them all for their commitment and professionalism. The world is a safer place because of their contributions.

New Zealand also expresses its gratitude to all States which have contributed to the process, both financially and in kind. The response to the situation in Syria has been a truly international affair. New Zealand was pleased to support this important work by contributing to the Syria Trust Fund. Although much has been achieved, we cannot speak of the successes without also speaking of the challenges remaining. There is still considerable work to be done.

We have seen many delays in the process. We also note that the destruction of the chemical weapons productions facilities in Syria has yet to begin, months after it was scheduled to end.

In addition, New Zealand remains concerned over the completeness of Syria's initial declaration under the Chemical Weapons Convention. We strongly support the work of the Declaration Assessments Team in this regard.

New Zealand was also deeply concerned to read the second report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria. The report concluded that there was "compelling confirmation" that chlorine was "used as a weapon, systematically and repeatedly", in the territory of the Syrian



Arab Republic earlier this year. The evidence also strongly suggested that responsibility for the attacks lies with the Government of Syria.

New Zealand is deeply disturbed by this news, and fully supports the continued work of the Fact-Finding Mission. We need to do everything we can to ensure that this kind of atrocity does not happen again, and that those responsible are held to account.

For these reasons, New Zealand considers it imperative that the Executive Council continues to monitor the situation in Syria closely, and continues to meet on a regular basis in order to do so.

There are many other important elements of the OPCW's work around the globe.

We would like to make particular mention of efforts over the past year towards full implementation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention by its signatories. Given our close relationships with our Pacific Island neighbours, New Zealand is well aware of the challenges faced by small and developing States with limited resources in implementing the Convention. New Zealand was therefore pleased to contribute to, and participate in, the workshop organised by Australia and the OPCW in May this year for National Authorities of States Parties in Pacific Island States. The workshop included a special module on drafting and preparing national implementing legislation, and was a useful step towards the goal of achieving full implementation of the Convention in our region.

New Zealand was also pleased to support the OPCW's work on assistance and protection by providing funding for the Table Top Exercise for Asian State Parties which was held in Kuala Lumpur in October. Practical activities of this kind are important steps towards our shared goals.

New Zealand supports the call by the Government of Australia for consultations on the weaponisation of central nervous system-acting chemicals in law enforcement. We share the concerns raised by Australia and others in relation to the health and safety risk of such chemicals, and the possibility of deliberate misuse. New Zealand intends to commence shortly a process to consider this issue, with a view to determining a national position.

In May this year New Zealand began a two-year term on the Executive Council. We are pleased to be playing a full part in the decision-making apparatus of the OPCW and look forward to continuing to work constructively with other States Parties over the remainder of our term.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate New Zealand's full support for the OPCW and the Chemical Weapons Convention as we strive towards our collective goal of a world that is genuinely free of chemical weapons.

I ask that this statement be treated as an official document of this Conference.

Thank you Madam Chairperson.