

29TH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS

CONVENTION (CWC)

STATEMENT BY COUNTRIES OF THE PACIFIC

Chairperson, Director-General, Excellencies, Colleagues,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of 10 States Parties from the Pacific region, namely Australia, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, the Kingdom of Tonga, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Vanuatu.

Chairperson,

The Pacific is an Ocean of Peace and has provided longstanding support for global peace-making systems, institutions, and solutions. As such, we reaffirm our commitment to the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime and the key role of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in maintaining international peace and security, including in the Pacific.

Pacific island countries strongly support the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Technical Secretariat in implementing the CWC. We are committed to seeking a peaceful and diplomatic resolution towards complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including chemical weapons.

Given our vast maritime areas, countries in our region can be susceptible to the unchecked movement of sensitive material and equipment that could escalate chemical threats, including from non-State actors. Our 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent seeks to develop a safe and peaceful region. It is in this spirit of peace and harmony that Pacific countries recognise the important role of the OPCW, together with our regional architecture, such as the Pacific Islands Forum, in supporting our pursuit of a chemical weapons' free region. Further in line with our 2050 Strategy, we remain concerned about the impact of abandoned CWs on our oceans and environment. We look forward to continued cooperation with the OPCW and CWC member states on remediation.

Pacific countries welcome the Technical Secretariat's international cooperation and capacity building initiatives and are committed to working closely with the Technical Secretariat on CWC implementation support for States in the Pacific Region. We recognise the 2022 Sub-regional Forum on CWC National Implementation co-hosted by Australia and Malaysia in Brisbane, and the 2024 Sub-regional Workshop on Advancing Implementing Legislation on the Chemical Weapons Convention in Fiji, supported by New Zealand. These workshops brought together Pacific Islands States Parties and their regional counterparts to share experiences, good practices, and challenges with regards to the development of implementing legislation for the CWC. Furthermore, participants recognised that climate change is resulting in increased risks of coastal flooding, heat stress and changes in precipitation patterns all of which can disrupt critical infrastructure involved in the handling of toxic chemicals, such as ports, and contribute to increased releases from chemical waste disposal sites.

In September of this year, the OPCW organised a Regional Conference in Vanuatu on Effective Customs Control over the Trade and Transit of Toxic Chemicals in the Pacific Region. In close cooperation with the Government of Vanuatu and the Oceania Customs Organisation, the OPCW Regional Customs Conference enhanced participants' awareness of region-specific threats pertaining

to the acquisition of dual-use chemicals and fostered regional cooperation among customs authorities and national authorities in the Pacific.

Chairperson,

Chemical weapons continue to threaten and overshadow the peace and security of our globe. We commend the Technical Secretariat for its work and dedication in fulfilling its mandate to remain vigilant about any allegations of chemical weapon use, and where allegations arise, to take appropriate action. We express our abhorrence at the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Government and ISIL. We commend the impartial and independent work of the OPCW's Syria missions and call on Syria to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat in good faith and comply with its CWC obligations.

We reaffirm the importance of the rules-based international order and the UN Charter, and condemn all wars of aggression, including Russia's brutal war against Ukraine and underscore the need to reach, as soon as possible, a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace that respects Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, in line with the UN Charter and relevant UN resolutions. We express our deep concern regarding credible reports of Russia's repeated use of riot control agents and scheduled chemical substances as a method of warfare in Ukraine, which are prohibited by the CWC. We call on Russia to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat in good faith and comply with its CWC obligations.

Chairperson,

We look forward to working with the Technical Secretariat and States Parties towards further international cooperation and capacity building initiatives in the Pacific to promote awareness and enhance cooperation on the CWC in our region. Pacific Countries remain committed to upholding the global norm against the use of chemical weapons.

We kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official series document of the 29th Session of the Conference of the States Parties and publish it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you, Chairperson.