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**CANADA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SABINE NÖLKE  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA TO THE OPCW AT THE  
TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Distinguished Chairperson, Director-General, Permanent Representatives, colleagues,

Let me start by welcoming your election to this position, Mr Chairperson, and pledging my delegation's cooperation throughout these proceedings. I would like to thank your predecessor Ambassador Ibarrola for his work in preparing this meeting, as well as the General Committee of the Twentieth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, the Director-General, and the staff of the Technical Secretariat who have provided everything we need for our work this week.

The people of the Syrian Arab Republic find themselves in a situation of heavy despair. The conflict has descended into a lawless vortex, far beyond the reach of human rights norms and humanitarian law. Almost half a million people have been killed and countless others injured and maimed. More than half the population has been displaced. And as the international community struggles for meaningful policy responses, the situation worsens further, with the expanded use of siege tactics and the targeting of humanitarian workers and hospitals. United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Stephen O'Brien, has called the conflict "our generation's shame" – a label which is difficult to contest.

But there is at least one aspect of the crisis where meaningful action has been possible – and that is right here in The Hague. After a year of diligent and tireless effort, the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) has concluded that the Syrian Government used chemical weapons on at least three occasions, and that non-State actors did so in one verifiable instance. The implications of this finding for this Conference are inescapable: for the first time in the Convention's 19-year history, a State Party has been found to have violated the treaty's most fundamental tenet.

Canada condemns in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic and Da'esh. We demand that all parties to the conflict desist from any further use of chemical weapons, which is a war crime under international law.

The Syrian Arab Republic also continues to evade its obligation to open its books on all facets of its chemical weapons programme. We should collectively recall the Director-General's conclusion in June that Syria's explanations are "not scientifically or technically plausible" and that there is no point pursuing further dialogue without a complete change of approach by Damascus. This determination still stands. Since then, the Syrian Arab



Republic has consistently failed to produce meaningful documentation, cogent clarifications, or to act on the Secretariat's advice. When the Secretariat recently urged the Syrian Arab Republic to declare two full sections of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre, the Government declared three rooms and labelled this proof of unqualified cooperation.

For these and other reasons, Canada was pleased to see the Executive Council take action earlier this month on behalf of all States Parties, including by imposing the first new verification measures on the Syrian Arab Republic since the fall of 2013. We commend Council members for carrying out the duty for which this Conference elected them: to defend the Convention against challenges to its object and purpose.

Canada was also pleased, in light of continued allegations of chemical weapons use in the Syrian Arab Republic, to see the renewal of the JIM's mandate on 17 November. We would have preferred it if the United Nations Security Council had pursued Chapter 7 measures against the Syrian Arab Republic for its gross violations of international law as confirmed by the JIM – in particular the Convention and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). But we also take some solace in knowing that the JIM has not only performed its job admirably, but will be able to continue to build cases against those responsible. Canada fully expects that justice will eventually be served.

Canada expresses its deep gratitude to the leadership and staff of the JIM, as well as to members of the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission and Declaration Assessment Team. We laud their objectivity, dedication, competence, and professionalism in seeing their crucial missions through. Canada is proud to have contributed EUR 4.4 million in voluntary funding over the last year to support the work of the Technical Secretariat and the JIM on the Syrian Arab Republic and, by extension, the aims of the Convention as a whole.

The OPCW's experience in Libya over the last year could not present a starker contrast with the Syrian Arab Republic. In meeting their country's obligations, Libyan authorities have exhibited model commitment, often at great personal risk. The removal in August of the last remaining precursors for destruction in Germany marks the final chapter in a multi-year international undertaking to help Libya eliminate its chemical weapons programme once and for all.

One of Canada's proudest contributions to global disarmament in the last decade has been our role in this effort, anchored by EUR 4.7 million in voluntary funding since 2012 which helped destroy Libya's sulphur mustard stockpile as well as hundreds of tons of precursors. Canada salutes our partners for their financial and in-kind contributions, in particular Denmark, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, Finland, Italy, and the European Union. We also commend the OPCW for coordinating this complex undertaking, and applaud the initiative and cooperation of Libya's Government of National Accord in requesting and then facilitating the removal. Keeping these toxic chemicals out of the hands of Da'esh or other armed groups has made North Africa and the world more secure. It has also showcased the convening and operational capabilities of the OPCW, reaffirming its enduring, essential place in the international security architecture.

Turning to another State Party committed to eliminating its legacy stockpile, but needing a helping hand to get there, Iraq has taken important steps over the last year to prepare for destruction operations at the Al Muthana bunker complex. Canada has been happy to assist, providing funds through the OPCW to train Iraqi first responders in medical

counter-measures, as well as National Authority experts in sampling, analysis, and decontamination. These skills will not only allow government authorities finish the hazardous job at Al Muthana, but also help them respond to and investigate chemical weapons attacks by Da'esh on Iraqi territory. Canada looks forward to the submission of a final destruction plan in the months ahead.

While on the subject of hostile use of chemicals, Canada applauds the creation by the Director-General in May of a Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM). As we have learned from the Syrian experience, unforeseen contingencies can arrive suddenly and disruptively. The emerging threat posed by the acquisition of chemical weapons by non-State actors makes it vital that the Secretariat enhance its operational readiness to deploy on a moment's notice, in response to credible allegations of use. Such capabilities will also ensure the Organisation is fully capable of meeting the requirements of Article IX and Article X if called upon. Canada is pleased to be funding the RRAM's participation in a table-top and field exercise in the months ahead to strengthen interoperability between the various international agencies that could be called on to respond to a biological or chemical attack.

Canada also welcomes the substantive debate underway in the revitalised Article VI facilitations on industry issues, some of which date back decades to the Preparatory Commission. Many of the recommendations of the Scientific Advisory Board's Temporary Working Group on Verification make perfect sense and, if implemented, would improve the Secretariat's analytical capabilities – including in chemical forensics, biomedical analysis, and use of satellite imagery for investigations of alleged use. Other recommendations, such as the need to declare mixtures of discrete organic chemicals regardless of concentration levels, or to subject bio-mediated production of such chemicals to intensified verification, deserve careful scrutiny. They should not, in Canada's view, result in an artificial increase in the number of declarable OCPFs (Other Chemical Production Facilities) that have little relevance to the Convention and would lead both to dilution of the verification regime and to inefficient use of Secretariat resources.

Turning to administrative matters, Canada is pleased to support the Draft Programme and Budget for 2017 and to express appreciation for the smooth consultations which produced it in September. We welcome the Secretariat's continuing respect for principles of zero nominal growth and zero-based budgeting in its initial proposal to States Parties. In future years, we expect the Secretariat to be more proactive in maintaining an appropriate balance between operational and support staff numbers. We are also pleased to see the target level for the Working Capital Fund raised to EUR 7 million, and welcome the flexibility shown by delegations in keeping assessed contributions at 2016 levels so that we can use the expected surplus to move the Fund closer to that target. In future years, Canada would like to see savings from the Enterprise Resource Planning project channelled into the Working Capital Fund at the earliest prudent opportunity.

Despite these positive developments, Canada remains concerned with the Organisation's precarious cash position. It bears repeating that the only reason we are in this situation is the failure of some States Parties to pay their assessed contributions and verification costs. It is unacceptable that such delinquency may prevent the Technical Secretariat from fully implementing its programme of work. Membership in the OPCW comes with rightful benefits, but it also comes with matching obligations. Canada believes firmly that States in arrears must face the consequences of non-payment, and not just on voting rights: Canada's

view is that States Parties with more than two years' worth of outstanding dues should not enjoy access to staffing opportunities within the Secretariat for its citizens.

Canada was honoured to have been elected Co-Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities this year. We are conscious of the trust States Parties have invested in me and my South African colleague for this important task, as the Organisation gradually pivots from a mandate focused on chemical weapons destruction to one centred on preventing their re-emergence. My delegation pledges to work diligently and transparently with the facilitators of other informal mechanisms, regional coordinators, the Secretariat, and of course all States Parties to develop consensus-based recommendations for the Fourth Review Conference.

One emerging challenge which Canada, in its national capacity, sees as essential to be addressed is the threat posed by central nervous system-acting chemicals to the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We simply cannot turn a blind eye to a phenomenon which could trigger the re-emergence of chemical weapons under a different name, just because it was not foreseen by the Convention's drafters 25 years ago.

Canada's position is clear: we are not developing, producing, stockpiling, nor using any toxic chemicals other than riot control agents for law-enforcement purposes. We have therefore subscribed again this year to the joint paper on the aerosolisation of CNS-acting chemicals, and call on others to do the same. It is Canada's view that these agents, which possess unpredictable and potentially lethal properties, have no place in riot control or other law-enforcement activities. We thank Australia and Switzerland for their leadership, and encourage all States Parties to consider how the policy-making organs might address this issue in the years ahead. We also urge those who have developed national policies to declare them in formal meetings.

I would request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the States Parties and posted on the OPCW's public website.

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