Mr. President,

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement by the European Union on behalf of the EU and its Member States. Let me now elaborate on some matters of particular importance to Lithuania.

Chemical weapons have been outlawed for almost a century and their use is a serious violation of international law, a war crime and a crime against humanity. Lithuania condemns in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons in Syria and commends the efforts of international community aimed at ensuring that such attacks would never happen again. In this context, the staff of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons deserve our special gratitude for their devoted, tireless and often very dangerous work.

The efforts to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons programme, including the removal of declared chemical weapons stockpile from Syria and the complete destruction of Category 1 chemical materials, are a considerable step forward. It is important to acknowledge that the operation, which has now entered its second year, comes at a substantial cost for donor countries and their commitment is truly appreciated.

At the same time, substantial work remains to be done. We call upon the Syrian Arab Republic to fully comply with the UN Security Council Resolution 2118 and relevant OPCW Executive Council decisions and cooperate with the OPCW and the UN, in particular to ensure prompt destruction of the remaining chemical weapons’ production facilities and to rectify omissions and discrepancies in the initial chemical weapons declaration.

Furthermore, Lithuania is deeply concerned about systematic and repeated use of a toxic chemical chlorine as a weapon in Syria, as confirmed by the second report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission. Any use of toxic chemicals as a weapon is a clear violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the UN Security Council Resolution 2118 and those responsible must be held accountable. The report reproduces consistent witness accounts that chemicals were dropped from helicopters. They constitute a significant proof of who was responsible for the attacks, as only Syrian government possesses air assets. New reports on chlorine attacks continue to appear, some as recently as August this year, and the Fact Finding Mission should continue to look into these allegations.
Mr. President,

Lithuania continues to emphasize the need to address challenges resulting from sea-dumped chemical munitions. On 20 December 2013, the General Assembly adopted the resolution 68/208 on Cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea. The consensus text was negotiated in the Second Committee and is a follow-up and a significant addition to the first resolution adopted on this subject in 2010. It encourages outreach efforts to assess and increase awareness of the issue, promotes voluntary sharing of information and invites Member States to consider providing assistance and sharing expertise. The resolution also invites the Secretary General to continue seeking views on issues related to environmental effects of chemical weapons dumped at sea, in particular with a view to exploring the possibility to establish a database that would contain voluntarily shared information. We believe that such framework would substantially reinforce current regional efforts and look forward to further discussions in this regard.

Mr. President,

The potential misuse of life sciences and the risk of development of biological weapons is a major challenge to the international community. Lithuania stands committed to the BTWC as a key component of the international non-proliferation and disarmament framework. We actively support the universalisation, national implementation of and the full compliance with the Treaty.

Lithuania remains committed to working towards developing measures to effectively verify compliance with the BTWC. Working paper on Compliance with the BTWC, submitted by a number of countries including Lithuania, outlines the key questions on what constitutes compliance with the Convention and how States Parties can better demonstrate it. Lithuania was also one of the first countries to join the BWC Compliance Assessment Pilot Project and invites other States Parties to the BTWC to join.

I thank you.