Statement

by

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at the

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Thematic Discussion on Other Weapons of Mass Destruction

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I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

1. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery continues to be a growing threat to international peace and security.

2. The international community over the last year cooperated effectively and acted promptly in carrying out the destruction of Syria's declared chemical weapons stockpile, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2118 and the decisions by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Executive Council. The removal and ongoing destruction of the declared Syrian chemicals and of the remaining Production Facilities constitute a significant step towards the necessary complete and irreversible dismantling of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. We also welcome the continuing work of the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), but remain concerned that outstanding questions have yet to be adequately addressed by the Syrian regime. There are discrepancies surrounding both declared and undeclared stockpiles and production facilities. We expect the OPCW to investigate fully the inconsistencies in Syrian declarations. As long as questions remain on both the veracity of Syria's declaration and continuing use of chemical weapons, Syria cannot claim to be in full compliance with its obligations to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the UN and the international community. The EU contributed 17 million euros for the joint UN/OPCW Plan for the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons. In addition, several EU Member States made important financial and other contributions to support the plan and gave in-kind assistance for the removal, the transportation and the destruction of chemical materials.

3. The European Union is gravely concerned about the systematic and repeated use of toxic industrial chemicals such as chlorine as chemical weapons since last year as confirmed in the reports of the OPCW Fact Finding Mission (FFM) set up to establish the facts around these allegations. New similar allegations are continuing to be made. We share the view that the evidence presented by the FFM is substantial. This included reports of the use of helicopters, a capability that only the Syrian regime possesses. We support the Director-General's decision that the FFM continue its work and we remain determined to sanction those responsible for these horrific acts. In the same vein, we welcome the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2235 by means of which an OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism has been set up to identify perpetrators of chemical attacks in Syria. The Syrian Authorities must also cooperate in a transparent and open way with the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team to respond fully to their queries on gaps and discrepancies in the Syrian initial and subsequent declarations. Only then sufficient confidence will be ensured that its chemical weapons programme is completely and irreversibly dismantled.

4. The CWC is a key component of the non-proliferation and disarmament framework. Its integrity and strict application must be fully guaranteed. The EU and its Member States are the largest contributors to the OPCW, with a contribution amounting to 40 percent of OPCW budget, and will continue to substantially support its activities financially and in kind.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
Achieving the goals of time bound destruction and universality continues to pose challenges. We welcome for the recent accession of Myanmar/Burma and Angola to the Convention and we encourage the remaining four countries that have not yet adhered to or ratified the Convention to do so without delay. We call upon possessor states to expedite destruction of their chemical weapons stockpiles. Chemical weapons destruction operations should continue to be conducted in a sincere and transparent fashion, and within the framework of the existing verification regime. We underline also the importance of full national implementation of the Convention and also stress our willingness to assist new States Parties to meet their obligations under the Convention. We welcome the OPCW Director-General's initiative to initiate consultations on the future role of the organization in the post-destruction era and stand ready to actively participate in the relevant activities. We attach particular importance to the retention and further strengthening of the organization's capability for carrying out its verification mission including investigations of alleged use of chemical weapons and challenges inspections, the need for which has been fully demonstrated in Syria over the past two years.

5. The European Union and its Member States attach high priority to further strengthening the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). In the past decade, we have funded numerous projects in support of the BTWC and will continue to support projects aimed at (1) promoting universal adherence to the BTWC; (2) enhancing interaction with non-governmental stakeholders on Science and Technology, Biosafety & Biosecurity; (3) developing national capacities for BTWC implementation; (4) Supporting the inter-sessional programme and the preparations for the Eighth Review Conference; (5) strengthening the United Nations Secretary-General’s Mechanism; (6) enabling tools for awareness-raising, education and engagement.

6. As part of their concrete efforts to strengthen confidence in compliance with the BTWC, the EU and its Member States promote measures aimed at increasing the quality and relevance of CBM submissions. CBMs represent a unique instrument to help increase mutual trust, generate transparency and thus help demonstrate compliance with the Convention: all States Parties are obliged to submit their annual returns. With the financial support of the EU, the ISU has developed a CBM electronic facility. We must continue to work to make the CBM process as effective as possible.

7. Effective national implementation is fundamental for the integrity of the Convention. The current inter-sessional process offers also an opportunity to identify innovative approaches to enhance national implementation through voluntary exchanges of information, such as the proposed peer-review mechanism. The cross-regional interest in the biennial item on how to strengthen the implementation of Article VII earlier this year showed that there is room for a substantive discussion and for the identification of concrete avenues for work.

8. Working on strict coordination with WHO, OIE and FAO, as illustrated by the Ebola outbreak is a necessity and must be further encouraged. In this context we welcome the Global Health Security Agenda.

9. We welcome a wider cross regional dialogue on ways and means to strengthen the Convention and look forward to productive discussions at the next Meeting of States Parties, the last of the current inter-sessional before the Eight Review Conference.

10. The EU has continued to make progress with the implementation of its Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Centres of Excellence (CoE) Initiative, which aims at
reinforcing the institutional capacity of partner countries to prevent, detect and fight against the CBRN risk and strengthen the overall security architecture. This project is the largest initiative contributing to non-proliferation ever undertaken by the European Union. Around 100 million euro is dedicated to its implementation. CBRN Centres of Excellence initiative covers more than 60 countries in 8 regions of the world.

11. The EU and its Member States strongly believe that the proliferation of missiles, especially those capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction, continues to be a serious concern to us all and a threat to international peace and security, as reaffirmed in UN Security Council Resolutions 1540, 1887 and 1977. A number of tests of short and medium range missiles conducted over the last years outside all existing transparency and pre-notification schemes and in violation of UN Security Council resolutions, especially by the DPRK and Iran, deepen our concern. The use of ballistic missiles by the Syrian government also raises deep concerns as it represents an immediate threat to its civilian population and is destabilising peace and security in the region.

12. We strongly support the Hague Code of Conduct as the only multilateral transparency and confidence building instrument concerning the spread of ballistic missiles. Despite the increasing recognition of the Code and the support of the UN General Assembly, a number of key States with important activities in the area of ballistic missiles and space launch vehicles have not yet joined it. The EU promotes the universalisation of the Code and, where possible and appropriate, a closer relationship between the Code and the UN system. We call on all States that have not yet done so to adhere to it as soon as possible.

13. We also consider that the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), in which we continue to promote EU Member States’ membership, plays a key role in preventing missile proliferation. We are also in favour of examining further multilateral steps to prevent the threat of missile proliferation and to promote disarmament efforts in the missile field.

14. We continue to support other international mechanisms designed to prevent the proliferation of WMDs, such as the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction which have become important platforms of coordination and cooperation. The EU Centres of Excellence continue to contribute within the Global Partnership. Export controls, particularly those based on the Australia Group lists, are also very important tools to prevent the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons.