Statement by the Republic of Lithuania
at the UN General Assembly 1st Committee thematic discussion
on Other Weapons of Mass Destruction
23 October 2015, New York

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.

When in August 2013 the use by Syrian regime of sarin gas in Ghouta left hundreds of Syrians dead and many more injured, a rare consensus by the international community emerged and led to the destruction of the vast majority of declared chemical weapons. While the verification of Syria's chemical weapons declaration is ongoing and some very important questions remain, the efforts by the international community as well as devoted work by the OPCW-UN Joint Mission deserve special gratitude.

Yet despite all these efforts Ghouta was not the last time chemical weapons were used in Syria. The attacks — this time by barrel bombs filled with chlorine gas — continued in Talmenes, Al Tamanah, Kafr Zita, Idlib and elsewhere in Syria. Again civilians died or were maimed. The fact-finding mission appointed by the OPCW Director-General subsequently concluded that that a toxic chemical was used “systematically and repeatedly” as a weapon in villages in northern Syria. Several investigations are ongoing.

In August, the Security Council took a momentous decision by adopting resolution 2235 establishing the Joint Investigative Mechanism tasked to identify individuals, entities, groups or governments perpetrating, organizing, sponsoring or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria. Lithuania co-sponsored and voted in favour of this resolution, as it provides a clear path to identifying those responsible and sending a clear message that such crimes will not be tolerated. In this regard we look forward to receiving the first report by the Joint Investigative Mechanism. At the same time, while the attribution of responsibility is an important step, it cannot be the last, as the perpetrators of these atrocious acts must be brought to justice.
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 negotiated in the Second Committee on Cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea. The text 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. The report is due to be issued in 2016 and we intend to revisit this issue next autumn.

I thank you.