Statement by Turkey
Thematic Debate on Other WMD of the First Committee
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Mr. Chairman,

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is an alarming threat to international security. The risk of proliferation of such weapons to terrorists is an additional concern for Turkey.

The use of chemical weapons in our day breaks a very important and long-standing norm against the use of such weapons. Be it in Syria or elsewhere by states and non-state actors alike, this is a crime against humanity, a violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and an affront to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Turkey attaches great significance to the CWC. Banning the use of toxic chemicals as weapons, CWC requires that states parties chemically disarm by destroying any stockpiles of chemical weapons and any facilities which produced them. States parties have also agreed to create a verification regime for certain toxic chemicals and their precursors to make sure such chemicals are only used for purposes not prohibited.

In Syria, the OPCW has stated in numerous reports that despite all its efforts, it is not able to verify the regime’s initial and subsequent declarations and that there remain “gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies” in these. We are seriously concerned by these reports.

We all recall the attribution of responsibility by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) (established under the Security Council resolution 2235 in order to identify perpetrators using chemical weapons in Syria) in the chemical weapons attacks in three cases in 2014 and 2015 to Syrian armed forces and in one case to Daesh.

More recently, the OPCW Fact Finding Mission (FFM) has confirmed the use of sarin in a chemical weapons attack on Khan Sheikhoun in April 2017 and exposure of victims to sulphur mustard in Um-Housh in September 2016.

Mr Chairman,
JIM’s findings confirm that the Syrian regime has not fulfilled its obligations and continued to use chemical weapons against the Syrian people. We strongly condemn these attacks. If we wish to see an end to these, we must ensure that there is no impunity with regard to such horrific actions. We cannot allow this to become the ‘new normal’.

Turkey supports the work of the FFM and JIM. We will maintain our support as we look forward to the timely renewal of the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism and its continuing investigations into further outstanding allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria. Continued work of these two bodies is important in ensuring deterrence against use of chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere.

One positive development in this field is in Libya where there is progress in the destruction of its chemical stockpiles. This is a positive and important development for Libya’s stability and a good example of the implementation of the CWC. We commend the OPCW for its work.

Chair,

Another important component of the global system against proliferation of WMDs is the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). Turkey does not possess any weapons covered under the BWC. We actively support the efforts for the universalization of the BTCW, and welcome Samoa’s accession, which brings the membership in the Convention to 179 States parties. We call upon all States not party to the BWC to join the Convention without further delay.

We are not satisfied with the outcome of the 8th Review Conference. We look forward to the forthcoming Meeting of States Parties as an opportunity to look at ways of strengthening the Convention and ensuring its relevance.

Thank you.