Joint Statement to the United Nations General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chairman, Committee Members, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

As we recognize the 21st anniversary this year of the 1997 entry-into-force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we need to note its many accomplishments – namely, the most universal arms control and disarmament treaty today with 193 States Parties; the safe and verified destruction of over 69,750 metric tons of deadly chemical agents, representing over 96% of declared stockpiles in eight possessor countries; over 6,300 OPCW inspections at 235 military and 2,255 industry sites in 87 countries; and innumerable education, training, and outreach workshops, seminars, and speeches around the world.

Mr. Chairman,

We have indeed come a long and successful way since the Convention was opened for signature in 1993. But we must not rest on our laurels, especially given the many challenges today of chemical weapons use in the Middle East, Malaysia, and most recently in the UK, by States Parties, non-member States, and non-state actors. We remain particularly troubled by the reports and findings of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the OPCW-United Nations Joint
Investigative Mechanism (JIM) that Syria has used both chlorine and Sarin nerve agent several times and that a non-state actor, the Islamic State, has used mustard agent at least twice.\(^i\)

Also disturbing is the lack of a complete and verified CWC Declaration, described by the OPCW Director-General as filled with “gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies,” by a State Party, namely Syria.\(^ii\) I commend the great majority of the OPCW States Parties and the Technical Secretariat for pursuing full disclosure of these blatant violations of the Convention, and for the past OPCW-UN investigations for seeking full accountability of the criminal perpetrators of these inhumane and vicious chemical attacks.

Mr. Chairman,

We must leave no stone unturned in protecting the global norm of the Convention; in ensuring that all violations will be thoroughly, professionally, and fairly investigated; in establishing a world free of chemical weapons; and in preventing chemical weapons from reemerging.

But these historic and worthy goals to help build a more secure and sustainable world require specific steps forward, namely, (1) pursuing full universality of the Convention by reaching out to the four remaining countries – Egypt, Israel, North Korea, and South Sudan – to join the Convention and give up any and all chemical weapons stockpiles; (2) pressing the 71 States Parties that have not yet completed full national implementation of the Convention to do so now; and (3) verifying the ongoing safe destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles in the US, projected to be completed by 2023.

We commend six of the eight declared chemical weapon possessor States – Albania, India, Iraq, Libya, Russia, and South Korea – for successfully and verifiably eliminating their declared chemical agent stockpiles under OPCW-extended deadlines between 2007 and 2017. And we commend the United States for safely eliminating 91% of its declared stockpile since 1990. Also deserving much credit are the many members of the Global Partnership, especially Germany, Canada, the United Kingdom, Finland, and the US, for helping with the safe demilitarization of CW stockpiles in Albania, Libya, Russia, and Syria.

But the innumerable reported instances of chemical weapons attacks in Syria since 2012; the assassination of Kim Jong-nam in Kuala Lumpur, allegedly by North Korean agents, in February, 2017\(^iii\); and the attempted assassination of Sergei Skripal with militarized nerve agent, allegedly by Russian assailants, in the UK in March, 2018,\(^iv\) all illustrate that the Chemical Weapons Convention is under attack. The fourth Special Session of the CWC Conference of States Parties this past summer in The Hague has now supported implementation of an attribution mechanism to determine the perpetrators of these horrible and illegal attacks. The forthcoming 23\(^{rd}\) CWC Conference of States Parties and the 4\(^{th}\) Five-Year Review Conference in The Hague next month will finalize the OPCW attribution mechanism that follows the veto by Russia of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) in the UN Security Council last year. I would also note the very helpful effort by France to establish the “International Partnership against
Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons” this past January; this coalition now includes 38 countries and international organizations.

I urge all UN Member States to pay close attention to full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention in order to build a world free of a whole class of weapons of mass destruction, but also very importantly to realize a non-discriminatory and verifiable model for weapons’ abolition.

Thank you for your kind attention to this important matter.

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i For OPCW reports on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, see https://www.opcw.org/fact-finding-mission.
ii For OPCW information on the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) efforts on Syria, see https://www.opcw.org/declaration-assessment-team.