Statement of the Netherlands

delivered by
Mrs. Sachi Claringbould, Deputy Permanent Representative to the
Conference on Disarmament

at the

seventy-third session of the General Assembly, First
Committee

Thematic Debate on Other Weapons of Mass Destruction

New York, 23 October 2018
Thank you Chairperson,

In addition to the statement delivered by the EU, the Netherlands would like to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

Multilateral institutions play a major role with regard to international security. My country has always championed, and will continue to champion, the rules-based international order, including effective multilateralism. The latter requires active cooperation by all of us.

Chairperson,

In April this year, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague was targeted by a hostile cyber operation. I would like to refer to the statement made on 4 October by the Presidents of the European Commission and European Council, and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs of the EU. They expressed serious concerns about the recent hostile cyber operation that attempted to undermine the integrity of the OPCW, a respected international organisation, hosted by the Netherlands. This aggressive act demonstrated contempt for the solemn purpose of the OPCW, which works to eradicate chemical weapons worldwide under a UN mandate. The EU deplores such actions, which undermine international law and international institutions. The EU will continue to strengthen the resilience of its institutions and those of its Member States, and international partners and organisations in the digital domain.

Chairperson,

Last year, the Security Council did not reach agreement on extension of the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, virtually creating a state of impunity for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We welcome and fully support the decision of the Special Conference of State Parties last June that expands the mandate of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to determine who was responsible for the use of these weapons. We also welcome the authority that was given to the Director-General to share information with the IIIM. The decision marks an important step towards accountability and justice.

Chairperson,

The Netherlands has emphasised on many previous occasions, that there is still critical work to be done regarding the initial declaration of Syria. For the most part, that work is the responsibility of Syria. This is even more urgent, as over the past years, there have been numerous incidents where attacks with chemical weapons were reported. Four attacks have decidedly been attributed to the Syrian regime, meaning the regime is still withholding and hiding chemical weapons. This behaviour is
outrageous and should be remedied without delay. The Netherlands is working within the EU to strengthen sanctions against Syria to curb the criminal behaviour of the Syrian regime. The Netherlands stands in support of the United Kingdom and reiterates its strong condemnation of the attack in Salisbury on 4 March this year. We agree with the assessment of the UK that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible and that there is no other plausible alternative.

Chairperson,

The Netherlands, together with Canada, is co-sponsoring a proposal by the United States to include on the CWC Schedule 1 list, the type of chemical warfare agent used in Salisbury and a closely related type. The Scientific Advisory Board of the OPCW last July clearly outlined the extreme risks of this type of chemical warfare agent. Moreover, it has no known use for purposes not prohibited by the CWC. We are therefore convinced that urgent action needs to be taken to list these chemicals.

Lastly, we call on the four states that remain outside the Convention to accede without delay.

Chairperson,

In August this year, the first round of meetings of experts of the BTWC took place. We welcome the discussions that took place and hope that the issues that are broadly supported will be further elaborated and will ultimately be used to implement the Convention. The Netherlands is seriously concerned with the grave financial situation of the Convention which puts at risk the proper holding of the December 2018 Meeting of States Parties and the continued functioning of the Implementation Support Unit. We urge those States Parties in arrears to pay the outstanding amounts in full and as soon as possible. We call upon the UN Secretary-General, the Chair of the 2018 MSP, the States Parties and the ISU to expedite their collective efforts to develop measures for ensuring the financial sustainability and institutional viability of the BTWC. We need a lasting solution. Our Convention is at stake.

Chairperson,

The CWC and the BTWC are two indispensable instruments in our collective pursuit of a safer world.

Thank you.