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STATEMENT BY

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On the occasion of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, First
Committee,

Thematic Debate on Other WMD

NEW YORK, 18 October 2016

Mr. Chairman,

In addition to the statement of the European Union, the Netherlands would like to underline the following issues.

The Netherlands is dismayed at the fact that this year we are once again forced to take up the issue of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. There are, however, several reasons why we must continue to address it.

First, there is the question of the Syrian declaration to the OPCW. Despite two years of intensive consultations, a large number of questions surrounding accuracy and completeness of that declaration are still outstanding. It is incumbent upon Syria to resolve this issue and to convince the international community that it has fully declared its entire chemical weapons programme and that it has been completely and irreversibly dismantled.

Secondly, during the last three years, there have been many allegations of continued use of chemical weapons in Syria. The OPCW-UN Joint Investigate Mechanism, established by the Security Council with its resolution 2235, concluded in its third report that Syria is responsible for two attacks with chemical weapons on its own population – and ISIS is responsible for one. Therefore we are no longer talking about **alleged** use, we are talking about **confirmed** use. Syria is a Party to the CWC and has clearly breached its obligations under the Convention and acted in contravention of Security Council resolution 2118.

Arguments that this is not the JIM's final report are void. The fourth JIM report will not revisit its earlier conclusions. It will only finalize its assessment of the three cases it did not have time to finish before.

It is clear that the international community must react firmly to these heinous acts and we call on the members of the Security Council to respond decisively to this violation of international law and of the Security Council's own resolution 2118.

In light of the above, the Netherlands is in favour of inclusion of firm language on this issue in the resolution on the implementation of the CWC.

As host country to the OPCW, the Netherlands looks forward to the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Organisation. We call on the four states that remain outside the Convention to accede without delay. Universal adherence would be a fitting birthday present.

Mr. Chairman,

We look forward to the 8th BWC Review Conference. Making sure this conference reaches ambitious and lasting results is more important than ever. We've seen that state actors and non-state actors no longer abstain from using chemical weapons. With technological advancements going faster and faster deployment of biological arms is becoming more easily achievable than ever before.

The Netherlands attaches great value to further strengthening the BWC. In order to realize this we focus on: (1) promoting universal adherence to the BWC by striving to universal membership, through effective national implementation and increasing confidence amongst states parties; (2) making sure current developments in the field of Science and Technology have a central place in the deliberations of the BTWC; (3) Strengthening the inter-sessional process by giving states parties to power to take binding decisions during this process; (4) Expanding the Implementation Support Unit, just by adding two staff members its capacity ability is already greatly enhanced.

To conclude the Netherlands calls upon the ISU, the WHO, the OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health), the FAO and other relevant institutions to increase their cooperation and coordination in order to enhance the global capacity in combating outbreaks of contagious diseases and the prevention of duplication of efforts. The Ebola outbreak illustrated this need and positive steps in addressing this need must be encouraged.

Mr. Chairman,

The CWC and the BWC are two indispensable tools in the efforts against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Issues surrounding nuclear weapons often grasp our full attention and their importance cannot be underestimated, but biological and chemical arms should never be overlooked in our pursuit of a safer world.

Thank you.