Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

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Thank you Chair. I'll try to set a good example. The UK associates itself with the statement made by the Finnish Ambassador on behalf of the EU.

I do want to give a big welcome to the many new colleagues, it's going to be a busy autumn ahead of us.

The most immediate task is to reflect on the recent weeks of discussions on the Director-General's draft programme and budget for 2020 and then provide a recommendation to the November Conference of States Parties. We studied it carefully and we welcome the efforts made by the Technical Secretariat to ensure that there will be no increase to the 2019 level of assessed contributions. We recognise that this is challenging given States Parties clear preference for core programmes and activities to be funded from the regular budget whenever possible. But the OPCW must continue to evolve and reform in response to new challenges, some of those will have budget implications.

We can also support the proposals for the use of the 2017 cash surplus. Many organisations struggle to deliver large IT projects. But it is clear that there needs to be a real focus now on ensuring the successful delivery of the Enterprise Resource Planning project as soon as possible.

We were particularly pleased to see a proposal to use some of the cash surplus to strengthen capacity in national Laboratories. This was also a focus for part of the UK's additional voluntary contributions this year and should help meet the objective of broadening the network of Designated Labs around the world.

We were, however, concerned to read the Director General's recent note on the overall cash situation. It highlighted the troubling lag in the receipt of assessed contributions and the pressure this puts on the OPCW's finances. We strongly urge all States Parties to settle their outstanding assessed contributions and other financial obligations in full, and urgently.

Mr Chair, the situation in Syria has been a long term and worrying pre-occupation of this Council. As we heard in the briefing by Technical Secretariat experts last week, Syria has made no progress since we last met in resolving the multitude of outstanding problems with their Declaration. These issues are significant, and they highlight Syria's failure to fully disclose and destroy its chemical weapons programme. Syria has had every opportunity to

demonstrate that it is serious about meeting its commitments under the Convention. And yet still, six years on, they have still failed to do so.

Instead we are confronted with a pattern of repeated chemical weapons use against the Syrian people. The UK has grave concerns about the most recent chemical attack on 19 May 2019 in Al-Kabaneh. We have shared information about this incident with the OPCW. And we will continue to shine a light on these abuses. Syria's persistent non-cooperation must not continue.

We were pleased to hear about the progress being made by the Investigation and Identification Team to identify those responsible for chemical weapons attacks in Syria. We look forward to their first report issuing in due course.

Mr Chair,

As we start to look ahead to the autumn Conference of States Parties an important issue before us will be the Canadian, Dutch and US proposal to add two families of Novichok to Schedule 1. This Council supported that proposal in January and we encourage all States Parties to join consensus on the adoption of the draft Decision in November in order to ensure greater oversight of these very dangerous chemical weapons.

We are also aware of the Russian Federation's recent proposal which removes those chemical structures not found to meet the criteria for inclusion in Schedule One. If the Russian Federation brings forward a Decision along the same lines then we would not oppose its adoption, as we indicated back in February.

In advance of the CSP we were deeply concerned to hear that a handful of states are trying to block the attendance of some well-respected civil society organisations as others have mentioned. This runs counter to guidelines previously agreed by us all and is completely unjustified, particularly for NGOs which have attended past CSPs. Bolstering awareness of the OPCW and its important work is something we should all support.

Thank you Mr Chair, and I hope I've set a good example.

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