Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

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Madame Chair, Director General

The United Kingdom supports the statement made by the Ambassador of Romania on behalf of the European Union.

We welcome the Fact Finding Mission's extremely thorough and well-evidenced report on the incident in Douma on 7 April 2018. After nearly a year of meticulous investigation, often in challenging circumstances, the FFM has drawn a clear conclusion: that a toxic chemical, likely molecular chlorine, was used as a weapon. We remember the many victims of that attack and their families today.

This is the latest case in an appalling series where the OPCW has confirmed chemical weapons use in Syria. We now look forward to further investigation by the Investigation and Identification Team to identify those responsible for this hideous attack.

We all heard in the Director-General's statement how the Technical Secretariat are redoubling efforts to get to the bottom of the serious gaps and inconsistencies in Syria's Declaration. The Syrian Arab Republic's failure to cooperate meaningfully with the OPCW over the last five years to resolve these issues is truly shocking. It is imperative that Syria comes to the meeting with the DAT next week ready to address the many deficiencies in their Declaration.

Madame Chair,

We are meeting today just over a year after a deadly chemical weapon was used in my own country. As with chemical weapons usage in Syria, this was a clear violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the UK remains determined to bring those responsible to account. The international community has come together in an unprecedented way over the last year to emphasise our determination to uphold the global norm against chemical weapons use.

As part of our collective response to the incident in Salisbury, the UK fully supported the proposal submitted by the US, Canada and the Netherlands to update the Schedules to the Convention. We welcome this Council's decision in January to recommend adoption of that proposal.

In relation to Russia's schedule proposal, it is regretful that their Delegation did not take on board the views of many states, the UK included, that would have enabled us to support most

of it.. Instead their priority appears to have been spreading misinformation and outright falsehoods outside this room to distract from Russia's own culpability.

The UK also underscores its support for the decision taken by the European Council on 21 January to impose sanctions in response to chemical weapons use in Syria and Salisbury. Such strong collective action sends a clear message that we will not tolerate chemical weapons use.

Madame Chair,

The UK welcomes the 7 March report from the Director General on progress in implementing the June Special Session Decision on addressing the threat from Chemical Weapons use. The adoption of the programme and budget at the November Conference of States Parties was an important step forward and we support the concrete steps taken towards information sharing with relevant bodies. The UK will provide voluntary contributions to enable implementation of the June Decision, including £500,000 for the important new ChemTech Centre.

We welcome the proposals presented in the DG's note of 15 November 2018, pursuant to paragraph 21 of the June Decision, and look forward to their further elaboration. Strengthening the implementation of the verification regime and enhancing assistance to states parties are important components of the overall effort to address the threats from chemical weapons use.

Finally Madame Chair, the UK was grateful for the non-paper proposing a way forward on addressing OPCW tenure policy and related issues. We support the idea of a facilitation and are grateful to the Ambassadors who are willing to guide this process forwards.

Thank you

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