Mr. Chairman,

1. Allow me first of all to congratulate you on your election to the Chair of the First Committee, and thank you for the opportunity for the OPCW to participate in the today’s High-Level exchange.

2. It is a source of immense pride to the staff of the OPCW that their work has been recognised by no lesser a body than the Nobel Academy. Its decision last week to bestow the Nobel Peace prize on our organisation has cast the spotlight not only on our sixteen-year record of achievement, but also on multilateral arms control efforts more broadly. I hope all of us in the disarmament community can draw inspiration from this award for our ongoing work and the formidable tasks ahead.

3. Recent weeks have witnessed truly momentous developments for the Chemical Weapons Convention; developments which have created an unprecedented challenge for the work of the OPCW.

4. On 14 September, not long after it was confirmed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations that chemical weapons had been used in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta on 21 August, the Syrian Arab Republic deposited its instrument of accession to the Convention which entered into force for Syria three days ago (on 14 October). On 27 September, the
Executive Council of the OPCW took a historic decision on the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons, to be completed in the first half of 2014. This decision was reinforced by United Nations Security Council resolution 2118, which was adopted on the same day.

5. A joint OPCW-UN mission has been established to oversee this accelerated destruction programme. Our inspectors have started inspection and verification activities, based on the disclosure provided by Syria on 19 September and an updated disclosure, prepared in cooperation with OPCW experts and submitted to the OPCW on 4 October. The most immediate goal remains to render all production facilities and mixing and filling equipment unusable, a process also referred to as functional destruction, by 1 November.

6. To date, our mission has recorded steady progress, assisted by constructive cooperation from Syrian officials. In accordance with the OPCW Executive Council decision, the Director-General will provide monthly reports to the Executive Council on progress made towards implementation of the decision, as well as report to the Security Council through the Secretary General of the United Nations.

7. The OPCW values the crucial support provided by the United Nations in this historic mission, especially in the areas of security, logistics and field support. Given the ongoing conflict in Syria, the safety and security of our staff is of paramount importance.
8. The Director-General and the Secretary-General are in regular contact on all matters related to the joint mission and I am confident that the well-established cooperation between our two organisations will help bring this mission to a successful conclusion. I can assure you that our Organisation is dedicating all of its energy, expertise and resources to meet this formidable challenge.

9. Fruitful collaboration between the OPCW and the UN has also been in evidence in the United Nations Mission to Investigate Alleged Uses of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. To date, two teams of OPCW inspectors have participated in this mission, from 18 to 31 August and from 21 to 30 September. As I have noted earlier, the mission has reported that chemical weapons had been used in Ghouta on 21 August. The Director-General added his voice to international condemnation of this heinous attack. The investigation in Syria continues, and the UN Mission Head, Professor Sellström, has indicated that he plans to issue a final report to the Secretary-General by the end of this month.

10. Syria’s accession brings the number of States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, following Somalia’s accession earlier this year, on 28 June, to 190. Only six states now remain outside the Convention – two that have signed but not ratified (Israel and Myanmar) and four that have not yet signed (Angola, DPRK, Egypt, South Sudan). We have consistently called on the six States outside of the Convention to join without delay or precondition. Universal adherence remains a high priority for the OPCW and its member states as a central means for securing the permanence, integrity and effectiveness of the global ban on chemical weapons.
Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

11. In the sixteen years of the operation of the Convention, steady progress continues to be made in our efforts to destroy the remaining declared chemical weapons stockpiles.

12. The Organisation has thus far verified the destruction of 58,170 metric tonnes, amounting to close to 82%, of the total of 71,000 metric tonnes of chemical weapons stockpiles that had been declared by States Parties. The two major possessor states, the Russian Federation and the United States of America, remain well on track towards achieving their destruction targets.

13. Three other countries, which had declared possession of chemical weapons, have commendably fulfilled their obligation to destroy their entire stockpile of chemical weapons. To date, all of the 70 declared Chemical Weapons Production Facilities have been inactivated, and nearly 92% of them have been either destroyed or permanently converted for peaceful purposes. These were facilities specifically built to produce chemical weapons.

14. The Chemical Weapons Convention is a multi-dimensional instrument. In addition to complete disarmament, its goals comprise non-proliferation, or the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons; promotion of international cooperation for peaceful application of chemistry; and provision of assistance and protection to States Parties against chemical weapons.
15. The Convention ensures that the reach of its verification regime extends to the global chemical industry as a means of preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. Rather than hinder research and commercial growth, this measure helps build confidence and create transparency.

16. There are approximately 5,000 facilities around the world that are of interest for the purposes of implementation of the Convention. These facilities are subject to inspection by the OPCW and, indeed, those producing chemicals deemed to be of most relevance to the Convention are regularly inspected. So far, more than 2,000 such inspections have been carried out in 86 States Parties.

17. The Chemical Weapons Convention is tied closely to science, and the dynamic nature of scientific research and development has a direct impact on our work. We are facing a time of rapid advances in science and technology, such as the growing convergence of biology and chemistry, which can have a direct relevance for our efforts to ensure that the Convention remains an effective safeguard against chemical weapons. It is, therefore, our responsibility to adequately assess and address new developments in science and technology that may affect implementation of the Convention.

18. Under Article XI, the Convention provides for the promotion of international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for peaceful purposes. The OPCW has for this purpose established a wide range of programmes for creating awareness, building capacities and exchanging best practices and information, especially in States Parties with developing economies.
19. The OPCW programmes in support of broadening international cooperation and assistance, including in the area of assistance and protection against chemical weapons, offer strong incentives to our larger membership to remain engaged in, and benefit from, participation in the OPCW. In response to concerns regarding the potential misuse of toxic chemicals, we have intensified our assistance and protection programmes to strengthen the development of national capacities to effectively respond to chemical emergencies involving toxic chemicals.

20. Due to the threat posed by non-state actors, and by terrorism in particular, States Parties have also expressed an enhanced demand for the OPCW's activities to promote chemical safety and security. Further, while it is not an anti-terrorism agency, the OPCW is, contributing to the global efforts to counter the threat posed by terrorism. The OPCW has a mechanism of an Open Ended Working Group on Terrorism which provides a platform for the States Parties exchange views on the issues related to counter terrorism including cooperation and coordination with national, regional and international organisations dealing with counter terrorism matters.

21. Together with universal acceptance of the CWC, it is crucial that all our States Parties continue to make steady progress towards comprehensive domestic implementation in the interest of ensuring the effectiveness of the Convention as an international instrument. To this end, the Secretariat has developed an approach of country-specific assistance as well as capacity-building and training initiatives that are tailored to meet the assistance needs of individual countries to draft domestic legislation as well its full implementation. A sound legal framework – through legislation and the means to enforce it – create the domestic capacity
required to monitor, report on and guide activities involving chemicals along peaceful and productive lines. Our experience has shown that, far from being an imposition, national implementation serves to the advantage of the States Parties' security and economies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

22. The Third Special Session of the Conference of States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, also referred to as "the Third Review Conference", which met in April in The Hague, adopted a substantive, forward-looking report, providing us with a roadmap for years to come. The Conference was a successful and productive event, reconfirming the effective multilateral collaboration underpinning the Convention.

23. The Third Review Conference has highlighted, inter alia, that the Convention will remain an effective and credible verification regime, attach greater importance to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons, continue to monitor developments in science and technology that would impact the implementation of the Convention, and envisaged that the OPCW to become as a global repository of knowledge and expertise related to chemical weapons in the future. The Third Review Conference also reflected the States Parties strong commitment to continuing to deepen the technical Secretariat’s engagement and interaction with a broad range of stakeholders, including the global chemical industry to increase understanding of the Convention and strengthening implementation of its provisions.
24. States Parties reaffirmed their steadfast commitment to the chemical weapons ban and their resolve to work towards putting the report’s recommendations into practice.

Mr Chairman,

25. In conclusion, allow me to record here that the United Nations has consistently and strongly supported our common mission to achieve a world free of chemical weapons. With both organisations standing side by side in the extraordinary challenge of overseeing the destruction of Syria’s chemical arsenal, we are now, more than ever, conscious of the great benefit that comes from our cooperation in seeking to achieve international peace and security.

26. I thank you for your attention.