Statement on the Weapons of Mass Destruction

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Mr Chairman,

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement by the European Union with regard to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Mr Chairman,

Let me begin with another issue:

The highest government authorities of my country, along with those of France and the United Kingdom, have reaffirmed on Friday 13th of October their commitment to the JCPOA and to its full implementation by all sides. Preserving the JCPOA is in our shared national security interest. The nuclear deal was the culmination of 13 years of diplomacy and was a major step towards ensuring that Iran’s nuclear programme is not diverted for military purposes. At the same time as we work to preserve the JCPOA, we share concerns about Iran’s ballistic missile programme and regional activities that also affect our European security interests.

Mr Chairman,
The BTWC is the first international WMD convention ever signed that bans an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. It therefore has a special place in international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture.

Efforts towards complete universalisation need to go hand in hand with further progress in the BTWC implementation process as such, which needs to be ensured both at national and international level.

The implementation of the BTWC needs to be accompanied, supported, safeguarded and reviewed by an adequate and effective intersessional work programme that not only monitors developments in fields of relevance to the Convention, but also provides opportunities to develop suitable recommendations for States Parties to consider and act upon at their annual meetings and Review Conferences.

Unfortunately, the last Review Conference was unproductive in this regard. It is now the responsibility of the States Parties to the Convention to fulfil the mandate of the MSP in December, which is to reach consensus on an intersessional programme.

At the same time, States bear a particular responsibility for increasing confidence in compliance through sound national implementation, transparency and constructive cooperation at national and international level. Peer review exercises, confidence-building measures, the Wiesbaden Process and partnership programmes such as the German Biosecurity Programme are useful tools in this regard. In case of suspected use of biological weapons, adequate verification would be necessary. It is thus crucial to strengthen the UNSGM, as it is the only effective mechanism in place that could be used to react in such a situation.

Mr Chairman,

With regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), I would like to stress that there is reason to express satisfaction on the one hand, while on the other hand there are issues about which we should all be seriously concerned.

There are grounds for satisfaction because nearly all declared stockpiles of the current 192 member states of the OPCW have been eliminated. Just a couple of weeks ago, Russia announced that it has completed the destruction of its declared chemical weapons stockpile. Many States Parties, including Germany, have provided substantial financial assistance to make this happen. The destruction of the remaining Libyan chemical weapons in Germany will be completed within the planned time frame, that is, by the beginning of December
2017. All this brings us closer to the ultimate goal of achieving a world free of chemical weapons.

On the other hand, there are also issues about which we should all be seriously concerned. Unfortunately, we have to ask ourselves if the time has come to admit that the taboo against using chemical weapons is being eroded in front of our eyes. Over the last couple of years, chemical weapons have been used multiple times in Iraq and especially in Syria, with by far the largest number of victims. We also witnessed the use of chemical weapons in Malaysia in one case.

With regard to Syria, let me be very clear that we are not talking about some technical issues and a couple of isolated cases of alleged use. We are talking about grave concerns due to Syria’s declaration that can still – after four years – not be verified as accurate and complete. We urgently ask Syria to completely clarify these inconsistencies. At the same time, there have been many proven cases of chemical weapons use in Syria. We all still remember the terrifying pictures from Khan Shaykhun at the beginning of April this year.

As responsible CWC members, we owe it to the victims of chemical weapons that those responsible be identified and held accountable.

Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that the UN Security Council extends the mandate of the OPCW UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) without further delay. The JIM has to be able to continue its investigations of cases where chemical weapons were used in Syria.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,