STATEMENT BY

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

Thematic Debate on Other WMD

NEW YORK, 16 October 2017
Dear Chair,

In addition to the statement by 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 issue 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. The recent update of the Director General of the OPCW on the progress that the Declaration Assessment Team has made since the last report, shows hardly any progress at all. It is incumbent upon Syria to resolve this issue and to show, in a convincing manner, to 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 multiple 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, the use is no longer *alleged*, it is *confirmed*. 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. 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.

Moreover, recent reports on the possible use of sarin, in Lataminah on March 30, five days before the Khan Sheikhoun attack stress the urgent need for renewal, without delay, of the JIM mandate to identify the perpetrators of confirmed breaches of international laws banning chemical weapons. Work continuity and appropriate logistical conditions must be assured.

Finally, we call on the four states that remain outside the Convention to accede without delay.
Dear chair,

We had high hopes in the run-up to the 8th BWC Review Conference. Unfortunately, our expectations were not met. However, we have a chance to redeem ourselves in December. Making sure this conference reaches ambitious and lasting results is more important than ever: State actors and non-state actors have not refrained from using chemical weapons. And with rapid technological advancements, development of biological arms is becoming more easily achievable every day.

The Netherlands attaches great value to further strengthening the BWC. We focus on: (1) promoting universal adherence to the BWC by striving for universal membership, effective national implementation and increased 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 BWC; (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 is already greatly enhanced.

To conclude the Netherlands calls upon the ISU, the WHO, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the FAO and other relevant institutions to increase their cooperation and coordination in order to (establish synergies and avoid
duplications in the efforts to enhance the global capacity in preventing and combating outbreaks of contagious diseases. The 2014 Ebola outbreak illustrated this need. Positive steps in addressing this need must be encouraged.

Dear chair,

The CWC and the BWC are two indispensable instruments in the international efforts against the proliferation of ALL weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, biological and chemical, in our collective pursuit of a safer world.

Thank you.