Statement on behalf of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation Member States which are parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention at the 25th session of the Conference of the States Parties. November 30 - December 4, 2020

Mr. Chair, Mr. Director-General, Distinguished delegates,

I have the honor of delivering this statement on behalf of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) members which are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

In these difficult times, when the efforts of the entire international community are focused on fighting the coronavirus pandemic, it is critical for the OPCW to show unity in the face of turbulent politics and global economy, its commitment to the goals and purposes of the Convention, and readiness to do away with one of the most dangerous and deadly types of WMD.

In this regard, first of all we would like to thank Chairperson of the 24th Session of the Conference of the States Parties (CSP), H.E. Ambassador Krassimir Kostov of Bulgaria, and Chairperson of the Executive Council H.E. Ambassador Agustm Vasquez Gomez of El Salvador for their efforts in guiding the inter- sessional work and the preparation of this meeting. At the same time, we avail ourselves of this opportunity to point out the efforts of Director-General H.E. Fernando Arias and the Technical Secretariat in managing this event and taking measures against COVID-19 that emphasize that safety and security of participating delegations are the absolute priority.

We congratulate H.E. Ambassador Jose Antonio Zabalgoitia Trejo of Mexico upon his election to the post of the Chair of the 25th CSP Session and are confident that his professionalism and experience will help to ensure the success of this event.

Recognizing global problems related to the pandemic, and its unprecedented negative effects, as well as significant multilateral efforts to prevent further spread of the disease, we are still convinced that universal accession to the Convention is utmost goal. In this regard, we value the ongoing work of the Technical Secretariat in this area. CSTO Member States attach great importance to the universal nature of the CWC, and we encourage States which are not yet its parties to ratify the Convention without delay or to accede to it.

We reiterate that the integrity of the OPCW and consensus building in decision-making within the Organisation play a fundamental role in maintaining stability of the global architecture of non-proliferation and disarmament. The apolitical, purely technical, and unconfrontational nature of its work is one of the major prerequisites for achieving the main aim of the CWC - to create a world free of chemical weapons. This is why we encourage Member States to refrain from any attempt to politicize OPCW activities. Such actions can only deepen the rift between its Member States instead of leading to a search for compromise to achieve the goals and objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention. In this context, we are concerned about the interpretation of provisions of the Convention in the interests of certain countries.

Attribution in the OPCW and the granting of non-relevant powers of identifying the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons to the Technical Secretariat are unacceptable. We are sure that the United Nations Security Council has the exclusive competence in this regard and therefore believe that the reshaping of the OPCW mandate is a mistake. We proceed from the fact that any additional obligations of Member States can only be introduced by amending the Convention accordingly.

We strongly condemn the threats of using chemical weapons by anyone, including on civilian facilities. We strongly oppose the use of any dangerous chemicals, including white phosphorus.

CSTO Member States are convinced that the effective work of the OPCW largely depends on the role of the Technical Secretariat as an independent working body serving the interests of all its Member States. In order to strengthen its potential, gender and geographical balance needs to be improved through a transparent recruitment process. We urge for taking corresponding efforts to reach progress in this area.

Since its establishment, the CSTO has evolved into a multifunctional institution able to successfully respond to challenges within the area of its responsibility. Bearing in mind the lessons learned, we call for closer cooperation between our organisations in order to strengthen the international security.

Mr. Chair, in conclusion, CSTO Member States encourage all States Parties to the Conference to work in good faith towards the successful conclusion of the current session.

We request to treat this report as an official document and publish it on the OPCW external server and public web-site.