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**PAKISTAN**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SHUJJAT ALI RATHORE  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN TO  
THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

It is our pleasure to welcome you back at the helm of the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in your work.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan on behalf of the States Parties of the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

It is over a year now that we have been forced to work in this unusual format that limits our interact-ability and wholesome dialogue. Nonetheless, we commend the efforts made both by the delegations and the Technical Secretariat to keep the communication channels open in order to advance the work of the Organisation.

One of the primary objectives of this Organisation is the complete destruction of chemical weapons. We can proudly say that together we have accomplished a great deal in meeting that objective. Over 98% of the declared chemical weapons have been verifiably destroyed today. The progress, despite the throes of pandemic, continues in this area and it will not be long before we should achieve the grand milestone. We appreciate the efforts of the remaining possessor States Parties in the destruction of their stockpiles and hope that it shall achieve its target on time.

In a world already fraught with several seemingly insurmountable challenges, we must strive to eliminate danger and the potential of violence and suffering. As long as even one country remains outside the ambit of the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention"), the world would continue to face the possible menace. What we need is a complete assurance that the humanity is free from the threat of chemical weapons use. Fortunately, we are not far from achieving the universality of the Convention. We urge the Secretariat to intensify the efforts in this regard and explore ways and means to bring the few remaining countries into the fold of the Convention.

Although it is heartening to note that the progress, we have made in the domain of disarmament is exemplary and our successful march continues, it is also critical to pay attention to the incidents which could seriously harm our cause. The horrific incidents of the use of chemical weapons in last several years have made us realise that we were also facing a real threat of the re-emergence of these weapons. We reiterate our unequivocal condemnation of the use of chemical weapons anywhere by anyone and under any circumstances.



We read the Director-General's recent reports on progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. With regards to the Tripartite Agreement which facilitates the Technical Secretariat's mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic, it is noted that the OPCW, UNOPS and the Syrian Arab Republic have, in principle, agreed for another six-month extension of the Agreement. We support the continuation of constructive engagement between the Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic for the resolution of all outstanding matters.

Despite our continuing strong support for the Organisation and the indispensable objectives of the Convention, we must register our concerns in the manner that business has been carried out recently by and at the OPCW. The axiomatic value of consensus in disarmament has repeatedly been violated. This has been at the cost of traditional amicable interactions that characterised the work of the Organisation and underwrote its success. It is now only confined to highly substantive decisions but is also impacting mundane items of ordinary business. A recent example was the nomination of members to the Advisory Board on Administrative and Financial Matters (ABAF), on which we had to go for a vote. Now, we are faced with another related matter which calls for change in the rules of procedure of ABAF. I hope this one is not pushed to a vote. One wonders for how long, how incessantly, and on how many matters would this trend continue. Pakistan desires, like many other States Parties to the Organisation, whether they choose to remain silent or speak out, that the change in the ABAF rules of procedure must only come about if all of us agree to it. We support the continuation of discussions to make adjustments that would be acceptable to each one of us.

Another issue that has become a bone of contention is the draft decision on central nervous system-acting chemicals (CNS-acting chemicals). We fear that this draft decision is likely to meet a similar fate unless better sense can prevail. Pakistan supported the initiative of addressing CNS-acting chemicals and we reiterate our position that we empathise with the justifications given to create an understanding and awareness among States Parties on the aerosolised use of CNS-acting chemicals. We may also recall that at the Second Review Conference of the States Parties in 2008, in the context of the Swiss proposal on riot control and incapacitating agents, Pakistan supported the proposal while some of the current proponents of the draft decision opposed it. However, it is of paramount importance that consensus must be adhered to. The urgency to push the matter to a vote is uncalled for and unwarranted. This would certainly exacerbate polarisation and politicisation in the Organisation. The wisdom to push the issue through a vote is questionable and this idea needs re-assessment. If we are calling this draft decision an "understanding," it is all the more important that all of us understand it the same way. At the heart of the word "understanding", there is an underlying assumption that there must not be a forced decision on those who do not agree with it in the current form. The understanding goes hand in hand with consensus. In the other case, if our intention is to see a formal and fundamental change or addition to the Convention, the procedure is explicitly given in the Convention. We hope that more time will be given for technical discussions to reach a consensus on this important issue to avoid voting on it at all costs.

Mr Chairperson, Pakistan firmly believes that the provisions of the Convention related to international cooperation and assistance deserve no less importance than others. It is essential to implement the Convention in a balanced manner so that the economic and technological interests of all the States Parties are also given due attention. It would effectively ensure their long-term interests in the OPCW. Pakistan would continue to play its active role to strengthen the Organisation and advancing our work in this area.

Last but not the least, we need to restore unity in the Organisation. Our collective will be that the endurance of the Convention must triumph over short-term interests. The spirit of cooperation and the unity of purpose were the hallmarks of the OPCW. There is still a chance to revive that spirit. We have drifted away to an undesirable extent; however, I hope that the situation is not beyond repair. The considerable reserve of goodwill that had always existed among us must not be lost in vain. I hope we shall be wise.

Thank you.

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