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CUBA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SORAYA ÁLVAREZ NÚÑEZ
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

The Cuban delegation wishes you success and thanks you once again for the professional discharge of your duties under complex and extraordinary conditions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Cuban delegation aligns itself with the statement read by H.E. Fikrat Akhundov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China.

The Cuban delegation has taken note of the procedures for convening the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council which, although it is considered an exception and does not constitute a modification of the regulations of the Organisation, without a doubt imposes serious restrictions on the development of our work. We again recognise the flexibility and cooperation demonstrated by the States Parties, particularly observer States, in order to overcome the major obstacles imposed by the exceptional procedures. In this regard, we encourage our work to be limited to maintain the vitality of the OPCW, without compromising its future with the adoption of substantive decisions that could not be considered in accordance with the normal procedures established at the Organisation and that do not have the support of a consensus among the States Parties.

Cuba reiterates its principled position of its foreign policy to progress steadily towards the achievement of general and complete disarmament, including the prohibition and elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, under strict and effective international control. The destruction of remaining chemical weapons stockpiles continues to be the highest priority for the OPCW, together with the creation and implementation of international cooperation programmes for the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all the provisions of the Convention.

Our delegation reiterates its firm call to the possessor State to finalise said destruction process, in an expedited, secure manner, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, its Verification Annex, and fully implementing the relevant adopted decisions, which demand that the specific measures in place be carried out swiftly in order to overcome the problems that have emerged in the destruction programme.



Cuba has always been in favour of and vehemently defended international cooperation. In these difficult times that the world is facing, even more political resolve is needed among all the States in genuine defence of multilateralism. The OPCW has only this option to fulfil its mandate and its noble objectives. Strengthening trust among the States Parties and maintaining the practice of taking decisions based on a consensus will help maintain the successful legacy of the Organisation in the long term.

The accusations and conclusions rushed through the Organisation and which are not in line with established procedure and the relevant provisions of the Convention lead to the politicisation of the work of the OPCW, contradict its technical nature, and only work against the credibility and international authority of the only organisation competent to verify the full implementation of the Convention, posing a risk to upholding the rights of the States Parties under the Convention.

We reiterate the call to maintain and broaden the successful cooperation that has been sustained over time between the Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic, without any external interference and with full respect for its sovereignty.

Regarding international assistance and cooperation, the Cuban delegation welcomes the efforts that the Division charged with these tasks has been making to maintain its activities in these complex, known circumstances of the past year. The digital modalities used will be of use in the future as additional, complementary options to the regular programmes. We welcome the fact that the planning of activities for the second half of the year anticipate the return to the in-person format, when and as possible.

We welcome the successful annual Review and Evaluation Workshop of the Components of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI in line with decision C-16/DEC.10, dated 1 December 2011, which fostered a constructive dialogue, and the presentation of proposals for moving forward towards the economic and technological development of the States Parties, as well as international cooperation in general, in the field of the peaceful use of chemistry.

We welcome the appointment of a co-facilitator for Article XI to address specific issues, specifically with the start of work of a drafting committee on facilitation activities slated for next 30 March, which will make it possible to make progress on an agreement of joint actions to be taken by OPCW States Parties in implementing decision C-16/DEC.10.

The Cuban delegation reiterates its support for all aspects of international cooperation. We again denounce the lack of progress in the field of national implementation of the Convention—under Article XI in particular—by the United States. The economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed by the Government of the United States against Cuba violates the provisions of the Convention and presents enormous obstacles for business, the development and promotion of scientific and technological knowledge in the field of chemistry for industrial, agricultural, investigative, medical, pharmaceutical, and other peaceful purposes. We denounce the fact that this State Party has not initiated—in line with the provisions of the Convention—the adoption of measures to examine national norms in the field of chemical trade in order to bring them into line with the object and purpose of the Convention. We strongly call for the end of this unilateral policy, which violates international law, as well as the implementation of the measures necessary to reverse it.

The Cuban delegation encourages and supports the work of the facilitators on issues concerning institutional governance. It believes that careful and constructive reflection by all States Parties on the issues in this field could lead, step by step, to a consensus on issues of great importance to the operation of the OPCW and, at the same time, the progressive commencement of negotiations within the various existing facilitations in order to address the priorities of the Organisation's work in a spirit of cooperation and consensus.

I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW and published on the OPCW website and extranet.

Thank you.

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