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MEXICO

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JOSÉ ANTONIO ZABALGOITIA TREJO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES TO THE
OPCW AT THE NINETY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Distinguished representatives,
Delegates,

The delegation of Mexico expresses to H.E. Abdelouahab Bellouki, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco and Chairperson of this honourable Executive Council its full support to ensure that this session of the Council comes to a successful close. At the same time, we reiterate our recognition of Ambassador Fernando Arias for the work done at the head of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and likewise, we extend this to the personnel of the Technical Secretariat for their professionalism and dedication—to the activities that their mandate demands, and to the implementation of the objectives of the Convention.

In particular, my delegation welcomes the work of the Director-General; over these past two years of the pandemic, there was no shortage of challenges, yet he ensured that the Organisation accomplished as much as was possible in terms of the implementation of the Convention in industry inspections, verification activities, and improving the capacities of the States Parties. Furthermore, while taking advantage of the opportunity that also came with the pandemic, progress was made in the use of technological tools to help organise virtual meetings, courses, and programmes. Above all, we ought to celebrate the fact that there was not one single case of COVID-19 risk or contagion at the meetings of the Executive Council or the Conference of the States Parties.

Our Organisation has been safe and healthy thanks to the collaboration of all the States Parties Representations. I believe that it is in this spirit of cooperation that the strength of the OPCW lies; that is to say, it lies in a multilateralism that resiliently confronts common problems and benefits the development of our societies with the peaceful use of chemicals.

The multilateralism to which I refer should not be seen as sidelined by the States Parties that have yet to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention, but it does mean that we should redouble our efforts to share the benefits and advantages offered by achieving universality. This should take into account membership in and ratification of the Convention, being a part of the OPCW and, from there, being a participant and beneficiary of international peace and security without the use of chemical weapons.



Mexico joins the collective effort of the States Parties to the Convention to completely reject the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances, as the use thereof is contrary to international law and international humanitarian law. On that same note, my country invites the States that are not yet members of the OPCW and to all insurgent groups to renounce any possibility of the use of said weapons. Likewise, Mexico joins those demanding the identification of perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons and toxic substances as weapons and that they be brought to justice.

In spite of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the programmes of chemical weapons destruction in the United States of America and in relation to chemical weapons abandoned by Japan in Chinese territory, Mexico urges both States Parties to complete the elimination of said weapons on time.

In spite of the fact that the Government of Mexico understands that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the lack of security in Syria, we are pleased to see that the Government of Damascus is being cooperative, by facilitating and agreeing to roadmaps to compromise that will make it possible to carry out the twenty-fifth round of inspections by the Declaration Assessment Team: to clarify the unresolved issues identified in its initial declaration; to issue visas, assistance, and security for the OPCW teams being deployed to Syria; to convene the planned meeting between Faisal Mekdad, the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Fernando Arias, the Director-General of the OPCW; and, finally, to hold those who have used chemical weapons responsible.

Multilateral action to prevent this humanitarian emergency from reaching the breaking point is being put to the test by the complicated situation in which the Syrian population is living. For this reason, Mexico turns to the support of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, the Security Council, and the other bodies of the United Nations to analyse the background situation and explore technical, economic, and political solutions in order to promptly bridge this eight-year crisis of anguish and despair; it is also an opportunity to hold the perpetrators responsible.

The Government of Mexico avails itself of this opportunity to highlight the fact that the construction of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology is the best sign of international cooperation for the benefit of the economic development of the States Parties, as it also envisages the need to act collectively in order to confront new threats of weapons and chemicals through modern working and investigative methods and tools. As the OPCW strengthens its commitment to international cooperation, as States Parties, we are committed to achieving the noble objective of the peaceful purposes of chemistry for the benefit of the environment and the whole of humankind.

On another note, in my national capacity, I align myself with the statements of the coordinator of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) regarding the need to continue with the consultations on amendments to the tenure policy and to ensure that underlying issues of interest to the membership as a whole are discussed, such as the imbalance in geographical distribution that exists to date and affects primarily the GRULAC region. It stands to note that this assessment is also shared by other regional groups and States Parties.

While this is a structural matter set out by the Convention itself in paragraph 44 of Article VIII—which affects or benefits all States Parties—it should not be subject to a vote and, as such, any modification should be based on a consensus. For this reason, my delegation recognises the special nature of the efforts taken to date by the facilitators, H.E. Laura Dupuy,

Ambassador of Uruguay, and H.E. Matthew Neuhaus, Ambassador of Australia. We extend to them our vote of confidence and are convinced that they will lead us towards a positive outcome.

Meanwhile, we are making progress in consultations on the scope and terms that should be determined for the flexibility exercised by the Director-General in extending personnel contracts. Mexico hopes that the Technical Secretariat will increase the hiring of Latin American staff members in order to meet the objectives of the Convention and to ensure that in practice, geographical distribution and gender parity are improved.

Over the life of the Organisation, there have been a variety of different challenges, many of which were overcome, while for others, unfortunately, we have not been able to find adequate ways to satisfy everyone. Nevertheless, we recognise that based on the collective efforts of the States Parties and the Organisation, we will be able to support existing mechanisms and incorporate others needed to meet the objectives of the Convention.

Mexico believes that now is the time for us to reflect and accept that not only can we do more to overcome current political positions, humanitarian crises, armed clashes, and to avoid the use of chemical weapons—but in a rapidly changing world with technological and scientific advances, we must strengthen multilateral actions, such as those being carried out by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

I kindly request that this statement be considered a public and official document of this session and published on the OPCW's official website.

Thank you.

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