



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Twenty-Sixth Session
29 November – 3 December 2021

C-26/NAT.58
29 November 2021
ENGLISH and SPANISH only

URUGUAY

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE EASTERN REPUBLIC OF
URUGUAY TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE
CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson, Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen,

I would like to express my sincere congratulations on your election as Chairperson of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, and assure you of the traditional support of my delegation for the success of the Conference. At the same time, we welcome the preparatory work done by the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador José Antonio Zabalgotia, who led the meetings of the Bureau of the Conference over this past year under challenging circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Eastern Republic of Uruguay, as one of the original signatories of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, and as one of the first countries to ratify it, reiterates its strong commitment thereto, as well as to the policies of disarmament and non-proliferation, and to the fundamental principles of the United Nations, in particular the preservation of international peace and security and the peaceful resolution of disputes. Uruguay strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere, under any circumstances, and by anyone, as it constitutes a flagrant violation of international law, and especially of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Uruguay values the efforts that are currently under way and that were planned through to September 2023 for the destruction by the United States of America of its remaining declared chemical stockpile. Likewise, Uruguay urges Japan and the People's Republic of China to continue uniting efforts towards the destruction of the chemical arsenal abandoned by Japan on the territory of the People's Republic of China in due course.

Uruguay has been closely following—and with concern—the developments in the Syrian chemical dossier. In particular, my country notes the results of the second report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) (S/1943/2021) published in April 2021 and which concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that a military helicopter of the Air Force of the Syrian Arab Republic released a cylinder that contained a toxic chemical over the city of Saraqib, on its territory, on 4 February 2018. Any use of chemical weapons is unacceptable, even within the context of an armed conflict, be it domestic or international, such as the one this country is experiencing. This only reinforces the urgent need to clarify the discrepancies and omissions related to Syria's initial and subsequent declarations of its stockpiles and facilities since its accession as a State Party to the Organisation in 2013 based on information exchanged within the framework of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT).



Uruguay reiterates its support for the professional and impartial work carried out by the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) in line with its mandate, which was set out in decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 of the Conference of the States Parties, as well as with international standards; Uruguay also supports the work of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria and looks forward to the forthcoming reports on the numerous incidents of the use of chemical weapons that the FFM and the IIT are analysing.

The OPCW's confirmation of the use of chemical weapons makes it even more necessary to guarantee a constructive dialogue between the Organisation's Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic, and in particular calls upon the Syrian authorities to facilitate all of the visas necessary to allow the different mechanisms of the Secretariat to enter and work *in situ* so that they may guarantee an adequate assessment of the facts.

Uruguay reiterates the importance of continued support for this multilateral forum and the work of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW towards achieving all the objectives of the Convention. This includes the matter of international cooperation, which is essential for the proper implementation of the Convention as it is a multidisciplinary effort that involves many governmental, private, and academic actors.

We recognise the vision and financial effort to be able to rely upon, in the future, the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) towards strengthening the institutional scientific and technical capacities of the States Parties, especially those that are developing.

We underscore the importance of cooperation in the field of chemistry under conditions of appropriate security in order to prevent accidents, including the strengthening of the national capacities of laboratories and authorities for the adequate and integrated handling of chemicals, as well as the identification of legal loopholes. We also note that progress is being made in working in a more synergetic manner with other international organisations, not only in disarmament and non-proliferation, but also with those associated with sustainable development, such as the World Customs Organization (WCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In particular, this concerns agreements on chemicals with provisions on international transfers (such as the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions, and the Minamata Convention), as well as the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), which promotes the sustainable use of chemical products.

In this regard, in 2021 Uruguay co-sponsored with the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) an online course for the Latin American and Caribbean region on security training, and also shared with the Technical Secretariat its guide for the correct implementation of the Convention for the chemical industry.

Uruguay offers its congratulations on the recent inclusion, for the first time, of a laboratory located in a State Party from the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean as an OPCW designated laboratory: the Institute of Chemistry, Biology, Radiology, and Nuclear Defense (CTEx-IDQBRN) of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

In line with its firm commitment to the Convention, Uruguay has decided to co-sponsor the draft decision entitled "Understanding Regarding the Aerosolised Use of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes", bearing in mind that the conclusions of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) have been eloquent and determined that these chemicals cannot be used as riot control agents due to their low safety margin when being

administered in aerosolised form, and their lethal and incapacitating effects. It does nothing more than clarify the limits for law enforcement and addresses one prohibited use of these chemicals.

Likewise, Uruguay supports the adoption of the Organisation's Programme and Budget for 2022 – 2023, while understanding that the proposed increase is reasonable given the efforts carried out by the Technical Secretariat to maintain zero nominal growth for many years by absorbing inflation without increasing contributions, which is ultimately unsustainable.

Regarding the co-facilitation of matters concerning the organisational governance issues being carried out by Ambassador Laura Dupuy, together with Ambassador Matthew Neuhaus of Australia, we underscore the collaborative work conducted over the many open and regional consultations held since September 2020 to evaluate adequate solutions for institutional needs with the appropriate level of flexibility in terms of the tenure policy, while also identifying the obstacles that may exist to having professional, competent personnel that reflects greater geographical diversity and gender parity.

On another matter, Uruguay is committed to working constructively on the preparations for the Organisation's Fifth Review Conference, which will be taking place in 2023, and urges all States Parties to get involved with a positive approach to this event, with the aim of achieving concrete, consensus-based results that will strengthen this Organisation and its noble mandate.

Finally, Uruguay—while renewing its support for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons as a multilateral guarantee of their destruction and non-proliferation—calls upon all States Parties to meet their legal obligations under the Convention, while urging all to work towards its universality with a view to achieving a world free of chemical weapons.

We request that this national statement be considered an official document of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and published on the Organisation's website and extranet.

Thank you.

- - - 0 - - -