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VENEZUELA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR GLADYS MARÍA GUTIÉRREZ ALVARADO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BOLIVARIAN
REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

The Permanent Mission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) expresses its gratitude to the Ambassador of Germany, H.E. Gudrun Lingner, who served as Chairperson of the Executive Council following the departure of H.E. Abdelouahab Bellouki, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco, for her contribution to the chairmanship of this Executive Council. Likewise, we welcome and wish success to the new Chairperson, H.E. Eniola Olaitan Ajayi, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and we assure her of our willingness to cooperate under her leadership.

Likewise, we congratulate H.E. Fernando Arias on his re-election as Director-General, and we extend our gratitude to him and to the Vice-Chairpersons of the Executive Council for the work done under his direction. On a similar note, we appreciate the work carried out by the staff of the OPCW and their permanent dedication to achieving the objectives of the Organisation.

The Venezuelan delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by H.E. Fikrat Akhundov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the OPCW, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

We reiterate that for Venezuela, global and absolute chemical disarmament is a fundamental goal, based on rigorous and authentic international control, which includes the suppression and eradication of the totality of weapons of mass destruction, the existence of which constitutes a threat to security and stability on the planet.

The delegation recalls that next 29 April will mark 25 years since the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Since then, the OPCW has achieved the destruction of most of the global combined chemical weapons stockpiles under the supervision of its States Parties. Nevertheless, in spite of this history and commendable work, the growing politicisation of the problem of chemical weapons use could considerably diminish the validity of the work of the Organisation, which is why it is necessary to reinforce a culture of consensus, cooperation, and multilateralism.



We await with interest the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2023, a good opportunity for strengthening the practice of the aforementioned guiding principles of the United Nations, and thus take decisions based on the commitment made to the common good, in close cooperation with all members and regional groups.

With regard to the elimination and destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and the destruction of its production facilities, Venezuela is pleased to note the enormous efforts carried out by the Syrian Arab Republic, based on lengthy work in collaboration with the Organisation. In this regard, the reports of the Director-General are conclusive in terms of the effective destruction of the aforementioned weapons and facilities declared by Syria, with international participation and the close supervision of the OPCW; this is a laudable achievement by the Republic in very challenging security circumstances that involve facing a multifactorial front of aggression, both domestically and externally.

Syria has expressed its wish to maintain effective cooperation with the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), which at the same time has requested the adoption of unprecedented measures of transparency by the authorities of this nation. In spite of the questioning stemming from certain media outlets and the political pressure that has surrounded this issue, the Syrian Arab Republic has stated its willingness to receive the DAT, which is why we urge the Technical Secretariat to value the commitment of the Syrian authorities. We eagerly await the continuation of successful cooperation between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic across the full range of issues that can be addressed, without any external interference, and with respect for its full sovereignty (territorial and political).

Venezuela expresses its concern regarding the attempts to accuse States Parties of the use of chemical weapons based on reports taken from open sources, both mass media and non-governmental organisations. This dynamic constitutes a risky precedent that could affect the technical and professional work of the Organisation.

With regard to other matters concerning the verification of the elimination of chemical weapons, we note with concern that the only possessor State will not meet the deadline set for the destruction of its chemical stockpile; we urge the United States of America, in its capacity as a possessor State, to comply both with the resolutions of the regulatory bodies as well as the provisions of the Convention, and in doing so, to comply with the purpose and fundamental principles of the OPCW.

With regard to administrative and financial matters, we recognise the efforts made in allocating resources for international cooperation for the States Parties characterised as having developing economies, taking into account the specific realities of each region or country, especially within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We call for the redoubling of efforts in the face of the many challenges posed by current global socio-economic conditions.

In terms of organisational matters, we insist on noting that recruitment of Technical Secretariat staff must take into account cross-cutting criteria such as candidates' geographic origin and gender, to ensure that professionals coming from States Parties with less developed economies are able to avail themselves of effective recruitment opportunities.

In addition to the importance of international cooperation, we advocate for the elimination of any measure related to discrimination—such as coercive unilateral measures—that are contrary to the principles of the United Nations and, as such, the provisions of the Convention. In particular,

we would denounce the impact of the sanctions that are currently imposed against Venezuela by the United States and other regional embargoes, as they hinder our institutional work within the OPCW, among other things of great value to our country, both internally and externally.

The implementation of Article XI, which stipulates the promotion of international cooperation for the peaceful use of chemicals, in addition to the elimination of barriers that impede the economic and technological development of States Parties in terms of chemical activities not prohibited by the Convention, is currently one of the Organisation's fundamental tasks. We express our gratitude to the outgoing facilitator of this Article, F.H. Shifa Kusumaningrum from the Embassy of Malaysia, whose work fostered dialogue and led to a consensus among all States Parties; we also welcome the incoming facilitator, Fatima Hamdia Tanweer of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and we wish her every success in her work.

Within this context, we welcome the annual review workshop on Article XI, as it serves as a suitable platform for presenting specific measures, solutions, and details that will make it possible to achieve the objectives set out in the Article. The subsequent work of the drafting committee, which compiled the ideas that emerged from said workshop, makes the possibility of effectively implementing the Article even more tangible. In this regard, it is critical that statements of support are translated into concrete results.

The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has informed the Chairperson of the Executive Council of its hope that this Ninety-Ninth Session will progress and conclude in line with the fundamental principles of the United Nations system and the provisions of the Convention. We hope that this session will achieve the goals that have been set, always within a framework of goodwill and spirit of dialogue, leading to a consensus and the strengthening of multilateralism and diplomacy aimed at peace, the common good, and respect for the diversity of the various models of society that exist around the world.

We welcome the attention given to the position of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela at this Ninety-Ninth Session of the Executive Council.

In conclusion, we request that this statement be considered an official document of this session and made available through Catalyst and the Organisation's website.

Thank you.

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