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CUBA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ANET PINO RIVERO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE OPCW
AT THE 100TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

We welcome H.E. Ziad M.D. Al Atiyah, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia, as Chairperson of the Executive Council. We wish to extend our appreciation of the Director-General, H.E. Fernando Arias, and the Vice-Chairpersons of the Executive Council for their reports.

The Cuban delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by H.E. Fikrat Akhundov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and China, which has been published on the Catalyst platform.

Cuba holds a firm and long-standing position in favour of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, including the prohibition and elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. In this regard, it expresses its unwavering condemnation of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, and under any circumstances. The existence and proliferation of these weapons continue to represent a critical threat to international peace and security.

We confirm the importance that the OPCW and all its States Parties continue to guarantee the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all the provisions of the Convention, including those that concern the economic and technological development of the States Parties. This precondition must be met and must take into account the complex situation generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected all our countries and has exacerbated the effects of the multi-factor crisis that we are dealing with.

We are pleased that we are now in a better epidemiological condition that will help us return to in-person modalities. Without a doubt, interaction among delegations contributes to improved ties among the States Parties in the work of the OPCW and contributes to fostering understanding and the spirit of consensus that should always prevail in the work of this Organisation. We confirm that the modalities employed at the previous sessions of the Executive Council, as well as those carried out by other subsidiary bodies, should continue to be seen as exceptional and not to be taken as the precedent for future work. In any case, we confirm the importance of strict compliance with the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Council and advocate for active, full, and non-discriminatory participation, with no technical obstacles, for all States Parties.



The Cuban delegation wishes to highlight the establishment of a coordinative mechanism for revitalising existing facilitations; we urge the Chairperson of the Executive Council to redouble efforts to explore means and ways to achieve said revitalisation, in line with the position paper delivered by the Non-Aligned Movement and China, dated 4 October 2019.

The Organisation should uphold its prestige and transparency in performing its functions, while fully meeting the objective for which it was created: verifying compliance with the provisions of the Convention, with authority and credibility at all times.

In this regard, we reiterate that any accusation against any other State Party of the use of chemical weapons should be duly based on thorough reports following OPCW investigations conducted in line with the provisions of the Convention and its procedures for work and verification. We reject any reports based on information from specific groups that lack any legitimacy, such as media outlets or any other public source that are not technically or scientifically thorough.

Cuba, in full compliance with the Convention, has continued to submit its corresponding national declarations in line with the pertinent provisions and established formats.

The Cuban delegation reiterates its call to the only State Party in possession of chemical weapons—the United States—to accelerate all measures necessary to guarantee compliance with the provisions of the Convention, its Verification Annex, and the full implementation of relevant adopted decisions. We are nearing a new review of the Convention and note that the statistics offered by the Secretariat on the destruction process are still insufficient. We hope that at the Fifth Review Conference scheduled for April 2023, we will be able to see improved data and that we will achieve the fundamental objective of a world free of chemical weapons.

Cuba notes the reports by the Director-General on the elimination and destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and its production facilities, and calls for the continuation of efforts aimed at resolving outstanding issues with full respect for the sovereignty of States. When facing any differences, the parties must come to a solution via dialogue and cooperation.

The Cuban delegation reaffirms that Article XI is one of the central objectives of the Convention. The full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all provisions of this Article is imperative in order to prevent any obstacles for the economic or technological development of States Parties, and to promote international cooperation in the field of chemistry for purposes not prohibited by the Convention, as one of its basic pillars.

We hope that this will be a key issue at the discussions held at the Fifth Review Conference and that we will be able to progress in developing a specific action plan that will make it possible to strengthen this activity. It not only represents a notable contribution of the Conference, but it will also lead to the materialisation of our long-standing desire and call as countries of the South that are States Parties to the Convention.

We highlight the importance of promoting international cooperation for the benefit of the States Parties through the transfer of technology, material, and equipment with peaceful purposes in the field of chemistry, as well as the elimination of any discriminatory restriction, such as unilateral, coercive measures against other States Parties, which are contrary to the letter and spirit of the Convention.

We once again condemn the lack of progress in national implementation by the United States with regard to Article XI of the Convention through the imposition of an illegal and inhumane economic, financial, and trade embargo against Cuba—of a marked extraterritorial nature—for 60 years. The genocidal nature of this policy has been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the imposition of 243 additional measures, and has been the primary obstacle hindering access to medications, reagents, diagnostic kits, protective gear, disinfectants, and other medical substances, equipment, and consumables that this country needs to effectively tackle this dangerous sickness that affects us all. To cite just one example, over this last year the Chemical Industry Business Group suffered damages over 2,222,000 dollars. We call for the cessation of this policy and the adoption of legislative measures necessary for the United States to meet compliance with Article XI.

We underscore the importance of holding the review and evaluation workshop of the components of an agreed framework for the full implementation of Article XI as a useful and necessary platform for developing concrete measures and recommendations aimed at ensuring the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of this Article. In this regard, we reiterate that the document produced by the drafting committee, which has consolidated the ideas presented at the annual workshops, serves as an important foundation for continuing discussions and working on an action plan that will offer complete actions for guaranteeing the adequate implementation of Article XI.

Likewise, we request the Technical Secretariat to provide a complete report on the weaknesses and challenges met in effectively implementing decision C-16/DEC.10, dated 1 December 2011, which remains fully in effect and that it also take into consideration the proposals of the Non-Aligned Movement and China (C-12/NAT.1, dated 6 November 2007) on the implementation of Article XI of the Convention, including an action plan.

It is imperative that the OPCW Programme and Budget assign substantial financial, technical, and human resources to international cooperation activities, which not only include training efforts, but also the transfer of technology and provision of the equipment and materials necessary for States Parties to develop chemical applications. The Cuban delegation supports the proposal made by the Non-Aligned Movement and China to establish a special fund within the regular budget for international cooperation and assistance activities in order to preserve the funds earmarked for these activities beyond the fiscal year.

With regard to the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology, which is currently under construction, while we reaffirm the importance of having the States Parties in charge of considering and adopting its modalities and mandate, we believe that one of its principal functions should be contributing to international cooperation activities.

The Cuban delegation notes the facilitations that are currently under way on the OPCW's organisational governance. We reiterate that hiring personnel in the Technical Secretariat should be fair and transparent, and should guarantee balanced geographic distribution in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 44, Article VIII of the Convention.

We again state that the practice of taking decisions by consensus is the correct approach for achieving the object and purpose of the Convention. We hope that this will be the spirit that prevails during the forthcoming Review Conference and we express our willingness to contribute everything possible towards this end.

The Cuban delegation requests that this statement be circulated as an official document of the 100th Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW and published on the Organisation's website and the Catalyst platform.

Thank you.

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