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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 101ST 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 and Chairperson of the Executive Council, and we welcome the Director-General, H.E. Fernando Arias, as well as the Vice-Chairpersons of the Executive Council and their reports.

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

The year 2023 will be a decisive one for this Organisation, together with the convention of the Fifth Review Conference, which will serve as an important moment for reflection upon the progress and challenges in implementing the Convention. We hope to finally achieve the complete elimination of chemical weapons through the finalisation of the destruction process by the sole possessor State. We believe this to be a transcendental result on the path toward total and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

In this context, we reaffirm our unwavering condemnation of the use 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 reaffirm the importance of having 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 the objective of boosting the economic and technological development of the States Parties. This principle should be even more of a priority in the complex situation generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted all our countries and which has exacerbated the effects of the multifaceted crisis that affects us.

With an improved epidemiological situation, we have the opportunity to resume in-person meetings, which contributes to improved relations among the States Parties in the work of the OPCW and supports the fostering of understanding and the spirit of consensus that should prevail within the work of this Organisation.



The Organisation must maintain its prestige and transparency in performing its functions, while faithfully complying with the objective for which it was created: verifying the implementation of the provisions of the Convention, with authority and credibility, at all times.

Its technical character must prevail, and in this sense, any accusation made against another State Party regarding the use of chemical weapons must be duly substantiated on the basis of thorough reports on OPCW investigations, developed in line with the provisions of the Convention and its work and verification procedures. We reject reports based on information from certain groups with no legitimacy, as well as the media or any other open source lacking a thorough technical and scientific basis.

Cuba, in full compliance with the Convention, has adopted the initial measures required, regulated control over the chemicals included on Schedules 1, 2, and 3, penalised the use of said chemicals for unauthorised purposes, and has continued to submit its national declarations in line with the relevant provisions and in the prescribed formats.

Cuba takes note of the Director-General's reports on the elimination and destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, as well as its production facilities, and strongly calls for the continuation of efforts to resolve outstanding issues with full respect for the sovereignty of the States. When facing differences, the parties must reach a solution through dialogue and cooperation. Likewise, we welcome the information received regarding the later from the Syrian Arab Republic addressed to the Technical Secretariat proposing a meeting in Beirut to discuss the logistical details of a high-level meeting. We recognise that this is an important step and a clear sign of Syria's willingness to cooperate; we hope that the Secretariat will respond positively to the request as soon as possible.

The full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all the provisions of Article XI is imperative. The related training, technology transfer, and equipment exchange programmes are vital for meeting one of the central objectives of the Convention. Likewise, it should guarantee the absence of any obstacles hindering the economic and technological development of the States Parties, while promoting international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited by the Convention—one of its basic pillars.

We hope that this will be a central topic of discussion at the Fifth Review Conference and that we will be able to make progress in developing a concrete action plan that will help strengthen this activity. This not only represents a notable contribution of the Conference, but will also express the desire and historic claim of the countries of the South that are States Parties to the Convention.

We condemn the lack of commitment of the United States to the implementation of Article XI of the Convention, as it maintains its illegal and inhumane economic, financial, and commercial embargo, which is markedly extra-territorial in nature and prevents Cuba from accessing reagents, protective gear, disinfectants, and other substances, equipment, and consumables that the country needs to develop its chemical and pharmaceutical industry. Other examples are the companies that have not been able or have refused to market products and equipment for purposes set out by this Convention, citing the norms of the embargo against Cuba. We strongly call for the end of this policy and the adoption of the necessary legal measures to ensure the United States complies with Article XI, which would make adequate implementation possible.

We underscore the importance of holding the annual review and evaluation workshop on the components of an agreed framework for the full implementation of Article XI as one useful

and necessary platform for developing specific 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 group, 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 lead to completed actions towards guaranteeing the adequate implementation of Article XI.

Likewise, we request that the Technical Secretariat provide a complete report on the drawbacks and challenges face in effectively implementing decision C-16/DEC.10, dated 1 December 2011; we request that it be kept in force, and that the Secretariat also take into consideration the proposals submitted by the Non-Aligned Movement and China on various occasions.

It is imperative that the OPCW's Programme and Budget allocate substantial financial, technical, and human resources for the implementation of international cooperation activities, which not only include training efforts, but also the transfer of technology and provision of the equipment and material necessary for the development of States Parties' chemical applications. The Cuban delegation supports the proposal of the Non-Aligned Movement and China to establish a special fund within the regular budget for international cooperation and assistance activities, with the aim of preserving the funds allocated for these activities beyond the fiscal year.

Concerning the OPCW's Centre for Chemistry and Technology, which is currently under construction, while we reiterate the importance of having the States Parties tasked with considering and adopting its modalities and mandate, we also believe that one of its primary functions should be contributing to international cooperation activities.

The Cuban delegation notes the facilitations under way on the OPCW's organisational governance. We reiterate that the recruitment of personnel to the Technical Secretariat must be fair and transparent, and should guarantee balanced geographical distribution in line with the provisions of paragraph 44, Article VIII of the Convention.

We reiterate that the practice of taking decisions based on a consensus is the correct approach for achieving the object and purpose of the Convention. We hope that this will be the spirit that prevails at the forthcoming Review Conference and we express our willingness to contribute to everything possible to achieve this goal.

The Cuban delegation requests that this statement be circulated as an official document of the 101st Session of the OPCW Executive Council and published on the Organisation's website and the Catalyst platform.

Thank you.

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