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COSTA RICA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ARNOLDO BRENES CASTRO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF COSTA RICA TO THE
OPCW AT THE TWENTY SEVENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE
STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

We congratulate the Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa, H.E. Vusimuzi Philemon Madonsela, on his appointment as Chairperson of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties, and offer him the support of Costa Rica in his work. We also acknowledge the dedicated work of H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway during the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference.

Costa Rica also expresses its recognition of the leadership of Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, as well as the tireless work of the personnel of the Technical Secretariat, their intense and dedicated work aimed at implementing the Convention, and their professionalism and impartiality. We would highlight in particular the format in which work has continued within the context of the pandemic, demonstrating the ability to respond to and prepare for unforeseen situations, and ultimately guarantee the implementation of the Convention. We encourage the Technical Secretariat to continue incorporating lessons learned into its work, as well as the good practices identified to maximise the scope of its programmes, including international cooperation activities.

We reiterate that the promotion and achievement of global disarmament are key components of Costa Rica's foreign policy. As a disarmed democracy that is faithful to its commitment to peace, we once again in this forum condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances.

This year we commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry-into-force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction. For Costa Rica, the commitment to achieving a world free of chemical weapons is a sign of how the international community can make this commitment and work in a dedicated manner towards achieving common goals for the benefit of humanity. Over the past quarter of a century, the OPCW has demonstrated why the international community should continue to diligently outline common goals aimed at peace. Along this path, needs for transformation and adaptation have been identified to face new and shared challenges.



Likewise, we recall the commitment of all States to comply with the obligations of global chemical disarmament, and we expect the destruction of remaining arsenals to be completed by September 2023, in line with the set deadlines and in accordance with the commitments undertaken within the framework of the Convention.

On a related note, we urge States not Party to ratify or accede to the Convention without delay. We emphasise our aspiration for the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This will contribute to building and strengthening international peace and security, completely ruling out the possibility of using chemical weapons at a global level.

The Chemical Weapons Convention has incorporated in its preamble the commitment to the realisation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It obliges all States "to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace [...]".

That notwithstanding, 2022 has been a year in which the multilateral system has faced an unprecedented threat due to the continued and escalating war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. We express our rejection of the repeated threats of chemical weapons use in the context of the aggression against Ukraine. They are reprehensible actions and contrary to all the efforts made every day to consolidate this Organisation.

Costa Rica wishes to reiterate that it will not recognise as legitimate any territorial acquisition resulting from the threat or use of force in violation of the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Ukraine. It would be moreover incompatible with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

It is pertinent and necessary to highlight our commitment to peace and dialogue. For this reason, we strongly call once more upon the Russian Federation to withdraw its armed forces from the territory of Ukraine immediately, completely, and unconditionally, in order to promote a solution through dialogue, negotiation, mediation, or other peaceful means.

It is with deep concern that Costa Rica notes that the Syrian dossier remains stagnant. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to comply with its obligations under the Convention, the decisions of the Executive Council, the Conference of States Parties, and the Security Council.

We view with deep concern the lack of cooperation by the Syrian Arab Republic to advance in the clarification of its initial declaration. Therefore, we urgently call upon the Syrian Arab Republic to provide the cooperation required by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) so that the deficiencies identified in the initial declaration can be clarified without delay. Likewise, Costa Rica awaits the convening of the twenty-fifth round of negotiations with the OPCW, without conditions.

We welcome and recognise the work of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), which released two new reports in 2022 (S/2017/2022 and S/2022/2022). Unfortunately for this Organisation, these reports have alarming results, as once again it was concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that chemicals were used as weapons: both in Kafr Zeita on 1 October 2016, and in Marea (Aleppo), on 1 September 2015. We express our condemnation of the use of chemical weapons and reiterate that such findings must be investigated to prevent impunity.

Regarding this same dossier, my delegation wishes to acknowledge the professional and dedicated work of the Inspection and Identification Team (IIT) of the Technical Secretariat, and encourages the Team to continue its work in accordance with the mandate assigned to it by the Conference.

My delegation condemns the attack perpetrated against Alexei Navalny in 2020, which constitutes a crime that must be investigated to prevent impunity. We regret that, to date, the circumstances of this criminal act have not yet been clarified.

Costa Rica expresses its solidarity with the victims of the use of chemical weapons and extends a resounding call to ensure that together, we guarantee that the Convention continues to respond appropriately to new and emergent threats, while upholding human beings at the centre of our actions.

We wish to express our gratitude to and support for Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia, Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Fifth Review Conference, which will be held in May 2023. We congratulate him on the progress made with the outlined roadmap, and his leadership towards achieving substantive results at such an important event, where the international community will have the opportunity to set a new milestone on the path towards the consolidation of chemical disarmament and the future of the OPCW.

For Costa Rica, the Fifth Review Conference should lay the foundations that will allow the Organisation to remain up to date and keep pace with advances in science and technology leading us to a new environment. In this context, we wish to highlight the work of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and its work to issue recommendations in relevant areas, such as relevant artificial intelligence, biotechnology, technological convergence, verification, chemical security and safety, and scientific literacy. We believe that the decision-making bodies should carefully study the various recommendations in the field of science and technology, as they represent both challenges and opportunities to promote the objectives of the Convention.

We see the work of the SAB and the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO) as fundamental in promoting scientific culture and literacy, which contribute to the prevention of vulnerability in the face of misinformation and the dissemination of distorted information.

We applaud the upcoming inauguration, in May 2023, of the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre). We extend our recognition of and gratitude to the Director-General for his vision of the future, and his commitment and dedication to ensuring that the ChemTech Centre will soon be a reality. The Centre will also play a central role in safeguarding knowledge in chemical disarmament, facilitating cooperation, and capacity building, as well as promoting the use of chemistry for peaceful purposes.

Our delegation welcomes the presentation of the revised budget for 2023, which takes into account the adjustments necessary to carry out the mandates of the Organisation; we support the decision on this matter that has been submitted to the Conference for consideration.

Likewise, we are pleased with the work that has been carried out to have a decision that establishes procedures for the appointment of the OPCW's External Auditor.

Costa Rica expresses its gratitude to the facilitators of the various working groups and clusters. We acknowledge their active commitment to making progress with the various pillars of the Convention, as part of our commitment to a global chemical disarmament system.

Continuous and updated training is essential for all States Parties to be able to effectively implement their obligations under the Convention. For this reason, Costa Rica wishes to put on record the benefit derived from the cooperation received during the intersessional period, which allowed progress in its commitment to the chemical industry. Work is being done at the national level to adjust the regulations relating to chemical safety through the Prevention, Preparation and Response to Chemical Accidents Regulation, and with an amendment to the Regulation for Land Transportation of Hazardous Materials.

In the future, the Organisation must continue to update and adapt its training programmes on a permanent basis in order to meet specific needs, which will provide support for national enforcement measures, and strengthen assistance and protection, while promoting economic and technological development and the capacities of the States in the peaceful use of chemistry, as part of the benefits derived from the Convention.

We join in expressing congratulations to Brazil on having its first laboratory certified by the OPCW in the Latin American and Caribbean Region. We recognise the relevance of cooperation so that in the future, other countries in the region can also join this network.

We strongly support incorporating the gender perspective as a transversal element at all levels, and in all of the Organisation's activities, cooperation programmes, and projects. In this sense, we support the strengthening and promotion of programmes aimed at highlighting the participation of women in chemistry, stimulating education in science, technology, and mathematics for girls and women, and promoting actions to forward the agenda of peace, women, and security as an essential element of this Organisation dedicated to disarmament.

Likewise, we support the Organisation's provision of the spaces required for the substantive participation of civil society in the Conferences of the States Parties, based on transparent criteria and procedures.

We also support the introduction of measures aimed at achieving balanced geographic distribution across the Organisation's staff, from the different regions, including personnel from the GRULAC countries.

Costa Rica, a country that upholds international law as the foundation of international peace and security, reiterates that it will continue to promote effective multilateralism to strengthen the Chemical Weapons Convention regime.

Finally, Costa Rica urges all of us, as an international community, not to give up our efforts to safeguard our global society from the worst scourges that have been known, and to—once and for all—banish the possibility of the use of chemical weapons.

I thank you for your attention, and request that this statement be issued as an official-series document of the Conference and published on Catalyst.

Thank you.