



OPCW

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COSTA RICA

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, AMBASSADOR FRANCISCO JOSÉ
AGUILAR URBINA,
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF COSTA RICA
AT THE GENERAL DEBATE HELD ON 3 DECEMBER 2008**

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Mr Chairman, Mr Director-General, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Mr Chairman, allow me first to express my deep satisfaction at your election to the Chair of this Conference. I extend my Government's congratulations to you and its pleasure at seeing you at the head of the deliberations that will take place during the coming days. We wish you every success, as that can only benefit the peace and security of our world.

On behalf of the Republic of Costa Rica, and on my own behalf, I congratulate and thank your predecessor, His Excellency Mr Abuelgasm Abdelwahid Sheik Idris, for his outstanding work during the last Conference.

Nor can I fail to mention and renew Costa Rica's congratulations, and my own, to the Director-General, Ambassador Rogelio Pfirter, for his wise and impartial management of the OPCW. My thanks go equally to all staff members of the Organisation for the excellent work they have done throughout this year, as in previous ones. Mr Director-General, this Organisation is a model for disarmament and multilateralism, and your leadership, action and professionalism have been essential in setting the OPCW as a model Organisation.

For this very reason, I want to give my special thanks to Mr Martin Strub, from the Swiss Mission, for his work during the last months as facilitator for budget issues. Martin has had to battle with a difficult subject in the days, weeks and months leading up to this week. I call upon the representatives of the States Parties to bring this matter to a successful conclusion.

The OPCW is making a supreme effort to achieve the objectives set by the United Nations in the aftermath of the Second World War. Therefore it is our task to keep our Organisation safe and to ensure that it does not become stagnant, at a time when forces of evil are causing hundreds of thousands of deaths everywhere on the planet.

Mr Chairman, Costa Rica has decided to participate in this Conference and in this general debate, to reaffirm its commitment to disarmament and multilateralism. My country is



convinced that disarmament and multilateralism are fundamental for the establishment of more democratic, and more prosperous, societies.

Costa Rica has no armed forces. Only last Monday we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the abolition of the Military. Sixty years ago, on the 1st of December 1948, José Figueres Ferrer, an exemplary citizen, short in stature but huge in courage and vision, struck down a battlement from one of the towers of the Bellavista Barracks in San José.

This deed marked the end of an era of violence, hatred and waste of resources and the beginning of an era in which education, peaceful coexistence, negotiation, respect for human rights and sustainable development have been the priorities of the entire nation. These are our objectives to this day, and our younger generations are today taught that respect for others is the star that should always be our guide.

Two weeks ago, the President of Costa Rica, Dr Óscar Arias Sánchez, addressed the Security Council to open Costa Rica's Presidency of that body. President Arias requested the unconditional implementation of Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations. This provision mandates members of the international community not to squander on armaments the limited human and economic resources of the world. In Article 26 of the Charter, the words "the least diversion of resources" mean, first and foremost, finding alternatives to excessive military spending that do not damage security. One of those alternatives is to strengthen multilateralism. As long as nations do not feel protected by strong regional organisations with real powers to act, they will continue to arm themselves at the expense of the development of their peoples – of the poorest, in particular – and at the expense of international security.

For this reason, my country considers that intergovernmental bodies such as the OPCW are fundamental to the advancement of humankind. There can be no doubt that the prime objective of this Organisation is disarmament, and that means the destruction of weapons of mass destruction, prohibiting the production and development of them and, above all, prohibiting their use – surely the most irrational of human behaviour.

With regard to destruction, we congratulate A State Party on having destroyed its chemical weapons stockpiles in the course of this current year. Also we call upon States Parties which have not still concluded the disposal of their stockpiles to fulfil their obligations within the deadlines set by the CWC.

As for non-proliferation, States Parties need to adopt their national implementing legislation and submit their declarations in accordance with the CWC. In this regard, the verification conducted by the OPCW is not to be ignored. However, we must not use the non-proliferation argument to hinder access to new technologies, to refuse cooperation, or to shackle trade. The CWC is one instrument, and Article VII is just as important as Article XI.

Mr Chairman, the year now ending has been very productive for Costa Rica as regards continuing the practical application of the CWC. As is well known, we have had our National Authority for many years, and, more recently, enacted legislation to apply the treaty internally. In 2008, activities were conducted in Costa Rica to spread awareness of the CWC by means of seminars held in various institutions. The list of businesses which import and export chemicals covered by the CWC has been expanded and brought up to date, by means

of registration and inspection. Normative and monitoring documents and experience have been exchanged, both with the OPCW and with the National Authorities of other countries.

Furthermore, Costa Rica was represented in different activities and training events held during the year in Mexico, Argentina, Ecuador and Finland. The training received in VERIFIN, in Finland, was crucial to the pursuit of the objectives of the CWC.

Also, as regards the Transfers Regime for fulfilment of the obligations contained in Article VII of the CWC, the General Customs Service has set up a national customs duties structure which follows the recommendation of the World Customs Organisation for identifying the chemicals in Schedules 1, 2, and 3 to the CWC. Similarly, with a view to facilitating the exchange of information and reducing the number of discrepancies in respect of transfers of chemicals controlled by the CWC, Costa Rica is fostering the recognition at Central American level of national customs tariffs, so that they can be incorporated into the Central American customs structure and be in force at regional level.

Mr Chairman, Costa Rica does not congratulate itself only on being a country with no armed forces or arsenals capable of threatening the security of any other State. We Costa Ricans feel pride at being part of a region which has, as a whole, declared its conviction that peace is the only civilised way for the peoples of the world to live together. We settle our disputes using dialogue and the peaceful means of resolving conflicts that are established by the United Nations Charter. It is not mere chance that, a few steps from this hall, in the Peace Palace, the International Court of Justice is deciding a large number of cases the parties to which are members of GRULAC.

It gives us especial pleasure to share a frontier with another country which has also declared peace on the world by abolishing its armed forces – Panama. Our common border is without doubt the most secure in the world, for it is one along which only dialogue and the brotherly embrace of two fraternal peoples are the weapons in common use.

However, something which makes feel especially proud to be Latin Americans is the fact that the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, have for decades – since before there was even a dream of having a treaty to prohibit the production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons – been complying with what is mandated by the CWC. It may seem a little strange for me to be saying this – how can one fulfil an obligation before the treaty creating it even exists? I recall that the destruction of weapons of mass destruction is one which has never arisen in my region, simply because there have never been any in the vast territory between the Rio Bravo in the north and the borders of Antarctica in the south.

That is why we must redouble our efforts to ensure that the only two States in the inter-American system which are not parties to the CWC – the Bahamas and the Dominican Republic – soon become full members of the group of nations meeting here today. Those two peaceful nations will dignify our deliberations when they are States Parties to the CWC.

However, just as I lament the fact that there are still two States in the Western Hemisphere which have yet to ratify the CWC, I am nonetheless pleased that we are coming closer and closer to universality. Costa Rica gives a warm welcome, and extends its arms to embrace the Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau and Lebanon. There are people living on our territory who have their roots in those three countries, and we are delighted that our relatives across the ocean are now covered by the welcoming blanket of the CWC.

Mr Chairman, I conclude by saying that my delegation is at your disposal to offer you any support you may consider necessary for our Conference to complete its mission.

Thank you very much.

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