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CUBA

**STATEMENT BY MAURICIO A. MARTÍNEZ DUQUE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE OPCW
AT THE SEVENTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,

The Cuban delegation welcomes you to the Chair of the Seventy-Third Session of the Executive Council, which we are certain you will guide with the experience and professionalism characteristic of you.

Cuba fully associates itself with the statement made by His Excellency Mr Kazem Gharib Abadi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the members of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China, which clearly expresses the positions that we share.

Conscious of the challenges which the OPCW has to face, Cuba considers that the future of this Organisation should be oriented towards the full achievement of the object and purpose of the Convention. Any decision on the future development of the OPCW ought to be adopted in its policy-making organs as a result of an exhaustive, transparent, inclusive and integral deliberation process which is based on consensus.

As regards the matter of the destruction of all categories of chemical weapons, which is one of the basic objectives of the OPCW, our principled position is clear: Cuba advocates general and complete disarmament, under strict, effective international control, which includes the prohibition and elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. The existence of weapons of mass destruction represents a serious threat to international peace and security.

The delegation of Cuba joins those delegations which have opposed the inclusion of the subject of Syria on the agenda of the Seventy-Third Session of the Executive Council, since these matters were debated and studied, and consensual positions approved, during the Third Review Conference, and we should not ignore these positions.

The delegation of Cuba is grateful for the information given by the Director-General on the Syrian situation.

Cuba shares the concern regarding both the alleged use of chemical weapons by armed opposition groups in Aleppo, in the north of Syria, and the resulting loss of innocent lives.



As regards the United Nations mission to investigate the alleged use of chemical weapons, Cuba has supported since the beginning the official request made by the Government of Syria to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 20 March last. Our country supports the conduct of an investigation if it is independent, specialised, impartial and in strict compliance with the terms agreed between the United Nations and the legitimate government of that Arabic State, in accordance with the objects and principles of the United Nations Charter. The methods used in said investigation should be identified in direct conversations between the Government of Syria and the Secretariat of the United Nations.

Cuba welcomes the decision of the Government of Syria to invite the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the head of the United Nations fact-finding mission to investigate the alleged use of chemical weapons to visit Syria. This initiative gives positive impetus to the fact-finding mission requested by the Government of Syria.

At the same time, Cuba repeats its condemnation of all acts of terrorism and violence in all their forms and manifestations that are being committed in Syria against the innocent civilian population by all those involved in this and any other conflict.

The OPCW has an important role to play in promoting the economic and technological advancement of the States Parties, especially those that are less developed. This is a permanent, just and legitimate demand being made on the part of the majority of members of the Organisation.

Unfortunately, more than 15 years after the entry into force of the Convention, the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI remains outstanding, despite the fact that its provisions have been one of the main incentives that have led many developing countries to adhere to the Convention.

Cuba finds it unacceptable that certain States Parties continue to apply unilateral measures which limit, restrict and even prohibit the free commerce in and transfer among States Parties of substances, equipment and information in the field of chemistry for peaceful purposes.

The unjust and criminal blockade imposed by the Government of the United States of America against Cuba for more than fifty years is a flagrant violation of the letter and spirit of the Convention, in particular Article XI thereof. We demand the immediate removal of these discriminatory restrictions, which are explicitly prohibited by the Convention.

During the Third Review Conference and in the final report thereof, the analysis of Article XI was given special relevance. This created the minimal conditions necessary to consider the proposal for an action plan in the shortest time possible. Therefore, Cuba stresses the need to start discussing in detail the action plan proposed for Article XI and supported by the Non-Aligned Movement and China. Our voices must be heard and our demands duly borne in mind. We also urge the continuation of the facilitation process with a view to achieving full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI.

The delegation of Cuba is grateful for the presentation by the Technical Secretariat of the matrix document and we think that this matrix is a reference point which could serve as a guide for discussions on the follow-up to the results of the Third Review Conference. It is already subject to modification as a result of the dynamics of the evolution of the topics, and it is now up to the States Parties to decide how the follow-up will be handled. We believe

that this matrix cannot pre-condition the analysis and course of action that might be adopted on these topics in the future; nor should it involve the re-opening of documents approved by the Third Review Conference.

Allow me to conclude, Mr Chairman, by emphasising the willingness of the Cuban delegation to work with you and the other delegations in an active and constructive manner to ensure that the Seventy-Third Session of the Executive Council produces the results that are needed at the moment. I reiterate that you may count on Cuba's full support and cooperation.

I would be grateful, Mr Chairman, if this statement were distributed as an official document of the Seventy-Third Session of the Executive Council.

Thank you very much.

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