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CUBA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. FERMÍN QUIÑONES SÁNCHEZ
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CUBA TO THE OPCW
AT THE SEVENTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

The delegation of the Republic of Cuba welcomes Ambassador Francesco Azzarello as Chairperson of this Seventy-Ninth Session of the Executive Council and would like to voice our confidence in your leadership in overseeing this session and bringing it to a successful close.

We welcome the reports presented by the Vice-Chairpersons of the Executive Council, as well as the Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, for his report, which addressed various matters on the current agenda and which will serve as a guide for this session.

Cuba fully aligns itself with the statement voiced by the honourable representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and China and wishes to voice its willingness and interest in working actively with the Technical Secretariat and the rest of the delegations toward achieving satisfactory results at this session.

General, complete, and immediate disarmament, under stringent and effective international control, including the prohibition and elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, is a priority for Cuba. Only a world free of weapons can serve as the basis for true and lasting peace, and a significant contribution to international security. Cuba continues to strive for a world without weapons of mass destruction and urgently calls for the elimination of these types of weapons.

At the same time, my delegation believes that the creation of a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is of vital importance, and it reiterates the call that was made at the Conference to establish said zone without any further delay or pretexts.

The destruction of all types of chemical weapons remains an unresolved task facing our Organisation. We reiterate that this process should be concluded in the soonest time possible, in line with the provisions of the Convention and the Verification Annex, and with the full application of the corresponding decisions that have been adopted. Cuba again urges possessor States to complete the destruction of their stockpiles as soon as possible.



With respect to the process of the destruction of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, we must praise the efforts that have been made by the government of said country, as well as its permanent and constructive cooperation with the Technical Secretariat. We appreciate the great compromise demonstrated by this nation, in spite of the very complex security situation that it faces.

We sincerely welcome the pace of the destruction of the 12 chemical weapons production facilities and we expect that process to be completed in the soonest possible time.

The Fact-Finding Mission must analyse all of the reliable sources of available information, including the additional elements provided by the Syrian Government, toward achieving impartial and objective results. We reiterate the need to preserve transparency and permanent communication among the Technical Secretariat and the relevant National Authorities.

We have been emphatic when it comes to the importance of maintaining a technical focus when addressing the question of the Syrian Arab Republic within the OPCW and avoiding any motivation driven by certain political agendas.

The OPCW has an important role to play in promoting the economic and technological economic process of the States Parties, particularly in less developed countries. At a time when we are already beginning to discuss the future of our Organisation, we are obliged to make international cooperation the priority it deserves to be and that we have not been able to achieve.

We appreciate the efforts of the Division of International Cooperation and Assistance toward achieving full implementation of Article XI of the Convention. Nevertheless, we reiterate that complete, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of said article remains an as-of-yet unachieved goal. Non-discriminatory implementation means the non-existence of restrictions among States Parties beyond those established by the Convention itself. This deprivation persists, in spite of the fact that it clearly contradicts what is stipulated in that international treaty.

As States Parties, without exception, we all have the legitimate right to participate in the broadest possible exchange of chemicals, equipment, and information in the field of chemistry for purposes not prohibited by the Convention; at the same time, we are all obliged to facilitate this exchange.

My delegation does not understand why some States continue to apply unilateral measures that limit, restrain, and even prohibit, in many cases, free exchange among States Parties in this area.

Despite the upcoming reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the governments of Cuba and the United States, I must note that the economic, commercial, and financial blockade suffered by my people for over 50 years remains intact and constitutes a violation of this multilateral treaty, and of Article XI in particular.

The blockade continues to put the brakes on the development of the chemical industry and other areas of our society, directly obstructing Cuba's access to chemical technologies and products that are indispensable for its development. We call for an end to this policy and with it, the elimination of the discriminatory restrictions to which Cuba is subjected.

My delegation insists that it is necessary to move forward in a constructive manner on the negotiation of a document that would make it possible to establish a mechanism to monitor the implementation of Article XI as is done for other articles of the Convention. In order to achieve this goal, you may count on Cuba's full cooperation and willingness. We highly value the sentiment that was felt during the most recent official consultations on this matter. We are working to preserve that spirit.

The discussion on the future of the OPCW must be an inclusive, transparent, and non-discriminatory exercise that should reflect the interests and concerns of all of the States Parties, which should be proactive in this process. Whatever decision is taken on this matter should be taken by the regulatory bodies of the Organisation. An integral focus should prevail in this process by which all of the pillars of the Convention should be represented equally.

Finally, we wish to express the Cuban Government's commitment to and willingness to work with the Organisation. Cuban Chancellor Bruno Rodríguez Parilla's official visit to the OPCW this past April has demonstrated this and provided an occasion to address a variety of relevant matters of interest to the Parties with the Director-General and the members of the Technical Secretariat.

I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Seventy-Ninth Session of the OPCW Executive Council.

Thank you.

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