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CUBA

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

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

The delegation of Cuba welcomes Ambassador Francesco Azzarello as Chairperson of this Eighty-First Session of the Executive Council and reiterates its confidence in his leadership in directing this session toward its successful completion.

We also welcome, first and foremost, the report presented by the Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, who has addressed all of the items on our agenda, and the reports by the Executive Council's Vice-Chairpersons.

We fully support the statement by the honourable representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons and China, and we again voice our willingness and interest to work actively with the Secretariat and the other delegations to achieve satisfactory results at this session.

Cuba reiterates its firm, transparent, and consistent position in defence of the prohibition and elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. My delegation believes that total, complete, and immediate disarmament under strict and effective international control is a priority in international relations today.

Cuba's position regarding the destruction of all categories of chemical weapons remains unchanged. This is an ongoing task for our Organisation. This process must be finalised in the soonest time possible in compliance with the provisions of the Convention, its Verification Annex, and with the full implementation of the corresponding decisions that have been adopted. My government again calls for possessor States to complete the destruction of their stockpiles in the fastest and safest way possible.

The Convention has an important mandate to promote the economic and technological progress of the States Parties, particularly States that are less developed. My delegation reiterates its call for a balance among the pillars of the Convention as part of the discussion on the future of our Organisation, including the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI.



We recognise the efforts of the International Cooperation and Assistance Branch toward achieving the full implementation of Article XI of the Convention, although we once again point out the necessity of adopting without further delay an action plan with specific measures benefitting less developed States Parties, guaranteeing the full and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI, and facilitating adequate monitoring of implementation, as happens with other articles of the Convention. The non-discriminatory implementation presupposes the elimination of restrictions among States Parties, with the exception of those established by the Convention itself. We all know that these restrictions persist.

As States Parties, we all—without exception—have the legitimate right to participate in the broadest possible exchange of chemicals, equipment, and information within the field of chemistry for purposes that are not prohibited by the Convention. At the same time, we are all obliged to facilitate said exchange. Regrettably, this process continues to be restricted, as some States continue to apply unilateral measures that limit—even prohibit—said exchange, thus hindering the development of countries like ours.

We reiterate that the economic, commercial, and financial blockade suffered by the Cuban people for more than 50 years remains intact and constitutes an unquestionable violation of this multilateral treaty, and Article XI in particular. The blockade against Cuba must end. This system of unilateral sanctions continues to restrict the development of the chemical industry, the public health system, and other areas in our society; it makes it impossible for Cuba to access technologies and critical chemical consumables.

With regard to the chemical weapons destruction process in the Syrian Arab Republic, my delegation recognises all of the efforts made by the government of said country, as well as its ongoing and constructive cooperation with the Technical Secretariat. We value the strong commitment demonstrated by the government of this nation, in spite of the very complex security situation, which it regrettably continues to face.

Regarding the ongoing investigations involving this State, my delegation again voices the need to search for ways to complete them satisfactorily, based on an impartial, serious, and objective analysis of all available information from reliable sources, including the Syrian Government.

As regards the existing discussion on the legal responsibility of non-State actors, my government reiterates its concerns about the fact that there is not an international consensus on this matter and insists upon the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, as the best way to ensure that this type of weapon does not fall into irresponsible hands. The OPCW's contributions to the fight against terrorism ought not be viewed as something beyond the mandate of the Convention, but as a result or consequence of achieving its goals.

We again state that the discussion on the future of the OPCW must be an inclusive, transparent, open, and non-discriminatory process; it must reflect the interests and concerns of all of the States Parties. We insist that a comprehensive approach prevail in this process, and that all of the pillars of the Convention are addressed equally.

Thank you very much.