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**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES
H.E. AMBASSADOR AGUSTÍN VÁSQUEZ GÓMEZ OF EL SALVADOR
AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE
OF THE STATES PARTIES TO REVIEW THE OPERATION
OF THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**

Distinguished delegates,

Let me now go back in time and reflect on the process that has brought us here today.

For over almost a year, delegations and the Technical Secretariat have been meeting regularly and conducted a full, comprehensive, and thorough review of the operation of the Convention since 2013. As Ambassador Puja has noted in his report to this Review Conference, the Open-Ended Working Group has left no stone unturned in its deliberations. The negotiations in the autumn have made a steady progress towards agreement on paragraphs across all four chapters of the draft document.

The Ambassadorial Retreat proved to be another stimulating moment for fostering the spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding of each other's positions. This was subsequently developed by the facilitators, who spared no efforts in increasing even further the number of the ad referendum agreed parts of the text. Thanks to all those efforts, when we started the Review Conference, we already had well over a hundred paragraphs ready.

This week, Ambassador Czepelak took over the relay and, despite the severe time constraint, guided you through the whole text one more time, gavelling down another set of paragraphs and yet again reducing the number of outstanding issues.

This brought us very close to the consensus that we all wished for when we started the process. Indeed, I venture to say that we got a good deal closer to consensus than most delegations expected. But it was also the moment when it was clear that we can only make that last step with a considerable amount of will to make concessions and compromises, including political ones. The number of remaining issues was small, but clearly of fundamental importance to a number of States Parties concerned.

Nevertheless, I am firmly convinced that regardless of the status of the Chair's Report, none of the efforts that we invested in the process were invested in vain. We made good progress in finding mutual understanding on a number of topics, important for the successful future of this Organisation. In this sense, I hope that the comprehensive overview of all the issues discussed, which you will find in my report, will be considered as a useful reference for



continuing the dialogue and building up together the enhancement of the Organisation. I encourage you all to make full use of it in the time to come.

Based on what I have heard in the course of today's proceedings, particularly under "Any Other Business", I will revise my report accordingly, so that our fruitful discussion under the relevant item can be fully reflected by including all the national statements and the several joint declarations made, as well as the reference made about the principle of *nothing is agreed until everything is agreed*, which was highlighted by so many delegations.

Before concluding, I would like to sincerely thank all delegations for their cooperation in assisting me, particularly those who helped as Vice-Chairs and facilitators of informal consultations. I am grateful to Ambassador Marcin Czepelak of Poland for the professional manner with which he chaired the Committee of the Whole, as well as to Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal of Bangladesh for his able guidance of the Credentials Committee. I am also thankful to Ambassador I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja for his leadership as the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fourth Review Conference.

I would also like to pay special tribute to the Director-General of the OPCW, Fernando Arias, for his good counsel and support.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the staff of the Technical Secretariat, who have laboured long and hard to prepare and support the Conference.

I wish to also thank the interpreters and translators, the editors, the conference room clerks, the people at the documentation centre, the technicians, and all staff members who assisted us. Special thanks also need to be extended to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the Municipality of The Hague for being such gracious hosts to us here in The Hague.

Finally, I want to express my profound gratitude to everyone for bestowing upon El Salvador and me the high honour of chairing this Conference. It has been a singular privilege to preside over such a historic event in the life of the OPCW.

Before I conclude allow me to make one more observation. Many delegations expressed their disappointment over the erosion of the tradition of consensual decision-making in the Organisation. I fully share this concern, as the Convention was founded on this principle. At the same time, I was pleased to observe that States Parties spared no effort to revert to this practice. Let us not resign on this noble aspiration in the months to come. Let us all ensure the Convention and the OPCW remain the example of successful multilateralism.

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