



OPCW

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VENEZUELA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR HAIFA AISSAMI MADAH
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC
OF VENEZUELA TO THE OPCW
AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE
OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

As a State Party to the Convention, our country firmly believes that the Convention provides an excellent multilateral mechanism for disarmament and the non-proliferation of chemical weapons. This belief is reinforced by the collective efforts of its members that, to date, can affirm that we have at our disposal an effective tool for this goal, in spite of the fact that there still remains one possessor State with these weapons of mass destruction.

There are many goals that this Organisation has achieved within the framework of our Convention. Nevertheless, we are convinced that we must persist until we have achieved full universality, and this continues to be an ongoing task to which we are decidedly committed.

As a State Party to the OPCW, Venezuela complies completely with its obligations under the Convention, and in this regard, our country neither produces nor stockpiles chemical weapons, and condemns the use of chemical weapons and toxic substances as weapons anywhere, by anyone, and under any circumstances; we are of the firm belief that those who have committed these horrendous acts must be held accountable for their crimes sooner rather than later.

We have been called to this special session of the Conference under an assertion of clear concern about the use of toxic substances in Iraq, Malaysia, the Syrian Arab Republic, and most recently the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; this concern is shared by all of us here today. It is only logical: how could anyone not be concerned by acts as grave as these?

However, this is being used as a pretext to generate within the public opinion the idea that an honourable objective is being pursued: strengthening the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons within the framework of the fight against terrorism. Yet it



stands to recall that this is not an organisation for the fight against terrorism; it is not an anti-terrorist organisation.

In fact, the proposal is to modify the mandate of the Director-General of the Technical Secretariat.

This means granting the power to provide technical expertise to any State Party to the Convention engaged in its own investigation of an incident involving the use of chemical weapons in its territory with the aim of identifying “the architects, executors, and accomplices” of this type of activity.

Further, those behind this initiative believe that it is possible to implement this modification without complying with clearly established procedures—without introducing amendments to the Convention—and in contradiction to Article XV; that is to say, simply by a vote at the Conference.

The draft decision of the distinguished delegation of the United Kingdom, with support from other States Parties, is of that very nature and has been submitted for the consideration of this Conference.

In this way, within the OPCW—which is an organisation that is exclusively technical in nature—the proposal is being made to establish a structure with a mandate similar to that of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism to investigate the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, which was established by resolution 2235 (2015) of the United Nations Security Council, which my country, Venezuela, supported. The Mechanism concluded its activities in 2017 and its mandate was not renewed due to the inability to overcome the imbalance of its membership and the lack of methodological rigour in its work.

The serious questions regarding the conclusions that were presented based on hearsay witness accounts—sometimes backed up by outside sources, such as the manipulation of the chain of custody of samples—or hearsay accounts often taken from social media, etc., give rise to serious doubts as to the accuracy of the conclusions made.

The document that is now being promoted in The Hague by the United Kingdom, together with other delegations, goes beyond the limits of the field of disarmament. If it is to be adopted, it could lead to a dangerous situation in which the mandate of an international organisation is broadly interpreted with prejudice to the exclusive prerogatives of the United Nations Security Council, thus undermining the authority and integrity of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Furthermore, such a decision would set a dangerous precedent for the way in which the OPCW operates, without meeting the requisite to introduce amendments to the Convention. We cannot rule out that in future, a certain group of countries would be tempted to assign an “attribution function” to other international structures in a similar manner, or to attempt to legitimise, without the consent of the United Nations Security Council, coercive, unilateral, and illicit measures against any State whose politics do not suit them for whatever reason.

We believe that there are no justifiable reasons for urgently convening this special session of the Conference of the States Parties. All of the issues included in the British draft decision can be examined within the framework of the OPCW’s ordinary activities; that is to say, at the sessions of the Executive Council in July and October, respectively, as well as the

Conference of the States Parties and the Review Conference scheduled for November this year.

In this context, our efforts should be aimed at improving the effectiveness of the activities of the OPCW in order to address cases of the alleged use of chemical weapons, as it is imperative that all approaches are carried out strictly within the framework of this Convention.

This means maintaining and strengthening the multilateral tool of greatest importance in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament.

Finally, in conclusion, we would like to add our voice to an appeal that has been made repeatedly at this forum and that is very pertinent at the moment: the call to all States Parties to refrain from polarising or politicising this Organisation, and to undertake tireless efforts in order to restore the consensus at the heart of our work in this institution.

I would kindly request that this statement be considered an official document of this special session of the Conference and published on the Organisation's website.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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