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CUBA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SORAYA ÁVAREZ
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETIETH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to congratulate the Director-General, H.E. Fernando Arias, on the presentation of his important report and for his management of the Organisation.

First of all, the delegation of Cuba aligns itself with the statement voiced by H.E. Haifa Aissami Madah, Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

Cuba is speaking at this Executive Council as an observer with its traditional, constructive position and its steadfast commitment to its obligations under the Convention, and convinced that cooperation, the search for a consensus, and responsible attention to the priority matters of the Convention should prevail over confrontation or any initiative that undermines the objectives that bring us together.

Cuba expressed its dissent by not adopting the final report of the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention due to the lack of a consensus and the politicisation of some issues. We hope that the collective efforts of the States Parties during the Fourth Review Conference will not have been in vain. As such, the delegation of Cuba supports the establishment of an Open-Ended Working Group to determine the results of said Conference, with regard to which a consensus could be achieved and which are priorities for the work of the Organisation within the framework of the Convention.

The delegation of Cuba believes that although the recruitment of Technical Secretariat personnel should be in conformity with paragraph 44 of Article VIII of the Convention, the necessity of the tenure policy should be evaluated in order to ensure the continuity and operational efficiency of the Secretariat in future. In this regard, we value the possibility of the adoption of some measures by the Director-General that would temporarily alleviate the most pressing issues. In this context, improvements within geographical distribution and gender balance within the Technical Secretariat and all of its activities should also be urgently considered.



Cuba expresses its profound concern regarding any attempt to accuse States Parties of using chemical weapons based on unsubstantiated allegations made in media reports or any other open source, including non-governmental entities. This trend could set a dangerous precedent for the future work of the OPCW.

With respect to the elimination and destruction of chemical weapons and the destruction of chemical weapons production facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic, Cuba welcomes the substantive efforts made and the progress achieved in this regard. We also welcome the reports by the Director-General on the finalisation of the destruction of all of the chemical weapons production facilities declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. We welcome the continuation of the present cooperation between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic on all matters. We encourage the continuation of high-level dialogues between the parties.

Cuba speaks in favour of the OPCW preserving its mandate and continuing to act decisively with a view to achieving the destruction of all chemical weapons and preventing the re-emergence thereof; encouraging the use of achievements in the field of chemistry exclusively for the benefit of mankind and the promotion of free trade of chemical products, as well as international cooperation and the exchange of scientific and technological information in terms of chemical activities not prohibited by the Convention, in an effort to improve the economic and technological development of all States Parties as enshrined in Article XI, given that all States Parties should implement its provisions and should prevent the hindrance thereof, with the elimination of any discriminatory restriction such as unilateral sanctions against other States Parties, which is contrary to the letter and spirit of the Convention and affects its viability in the long term while having an adverse impact at the level of cooperation among States Parties.

The delegation of Cuba urges all States Parties to take into consideration the document on the position of the Non-Aligned Movement and China on the implementation of Article XI, distributed on 26 November 2018 during the Fourth Review Conference.

The delegation of Cuba is pleased to support the annual workshop on the review and assessment of the components of a framework agreed upon for the full implementation of Article XI and recognises that this exercise is a useful platform for advancing the development of concrete measures to improve the implementation of this article. We call upon all States Parties and the Technical Secretariat to work together to allocate the necessary resources and establish an appropriate time frame for this workshop ahead of the Executive Council in July 2019.

Finally, the delegation of Cuba welcomes the project to modernise the current OPCW Laboratory and transform it into a Science and Technology Centre with a view to strengthen the scientific and technological capabilities of the OPCW to respond to the threat of chemical weapons and to support capacity building by the States Parties. In this regard, the regulatory bodies should consider and adopt the appropriate modalities and mandate. The States Parties should continue to play a decisive role in the Organisation's decision-taking process and must not be supplanted by other actors whose roles are complementary.

I request that this statement be distributed as an official document of this session of the Executive Council and published on the external website of the OPCW.

Thank you.

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