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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 NINETIETH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to begin my statement by welcoming His Excellency, Ambassador Fernando Arias and I thank him for his extensive report.

Likewise, I would like to welcome and congratulate the Deputy Director-General, Her Excellency Ambassador Odette Melono, on starting her work at our Organisation.

We also congratulate the new directors of the Technical Secretariat and wish them success in their endeavours.

My country aligns itself with the statement that I had the honour of presenting yesterday on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and China, and I would like to underscore a few points in our national capacity.

Our country shares the position that the combination of proposals, a positive approach, dialogue, and a consensus are indispensable elements in achieving common goals in the fight for disarmament and the non-proliferation of chemical weapons and, in general, the eradication of all weapons of mass destruction.

As a State Party to the OPCW, Venezuela does not possess, produce, or stockpile chemical weapons, and fully complies with its obligations under the Convention. In this regard, our country reiterates its principled position, with its strongest possible condemnation of the use of chemical weapons and chemicals as weapons in any place, by anyone, and under any circumstance. We also reaffirm that the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

This Organisation has achieved a great deal within the framework of our Convention. Nevertheless, we firmly believe that we must persist until we achieve full universality, as this continues to be an outstanding matter to which we are decidedly committed.

Venezuela supports compliance with and the implementation of all of the pillars of the Convention in an effective, non-discriminatory manner. For this reason, it is important not only to unite efforts in disarmament and the non-proliferation of these weapons of mass destruction, but also to recognise the equal importance of the fields of cooperation, the



transfer of technologies for purposes not prohibited by the Convention, and training that will help States strengthen their national capacities.

Our country welcomes United Nations General Assembly resolution A/73/L.48 (adopted on 6 December 2018), which declares 24 April the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace. We believe that this initiative, led by the Non-Aligned Movement, will be able to play an important role in promoting and propagating opportunities for multilateralism and diplomacy for peace and security in the world, especially within today's context.

We are pleased to note the substantive efforts that have been carried out and the progress that has been achieved with regard to the elimination and destruction of chemical weapons in Syria and the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons production facilities. We also welcome the reports by the Director-General on the finalisation of the destruction of all of the chemical weapons production facilities and chemical weapons declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. We call for and eagerly await the continuation of current successful cooperation between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic on all of these issues.

Once again, our country reiterates its concerns regarding the distorted practice via which false allegations are used to signal the use or alleged use of chemical weapons, or toxic chemicals as weapons, in the territory of a State Party based on rumours, speculation, or basic information shared via social networks or media outlets, or by non-governmental organisations that are self-declared representatives of civil society, without any serious technical or scientific investigation and, as a consequence, are bereft of any credibility whatsoever. The emergence of such practices is absolutely unacceptable and should bring those involved in echoing them to reflect on their actions.

Venezuela expresses its profound disappointment that the report of the Fourth Review Conference was not adopted due to the lack of a consensus and the politicisation of some issues. We hope that the collective effort of the States Parties during the Fourth Review Conference will not be wasted. As such, we align ourselves with the joint proposal presented by the Non-Aligned Movement and China, which suggests the establishment of an open-ended working group to identify, primarily, the results for which a consensus could be achieved.

Our country welcomes the modernisation of the OPCW Laboratory and its transformation into a Centre of Chemistry and Technology, and we reiterate our willingness to support the Director-General on this initiative and in all of the projects that will help strengthen both national capacities of all of the States Parties, without any form of discrimination, as well as the Organisation, as indicated by our Vice Minister, Dr Yván Gil, during the visit that took place on 18 February this year at the OPCW.

We believe that such initiatives are fully compatible with the budgetary policy observed to date by the Organisation, which is zero nominal growth, bearing in mind today's global economic realities.

Thus it is timely to note that we are still waiting for the establishment, by the Organisation and its host country, of a mechanism that would provide our country with a secure channel or mechanism to honour the financial commitments that we have to the OPCW, since unilateral and arbitrary sanctions have made normal interaction impossible for fulfilling said commitments.

Our delegation, consistent with the tenets and principles that we have continually upheld over the course of our statements, has spoken out strongly against politicising or polarising our discussions in order to preserve the essentially technical nature of the OPCW.

Nevertheless—and we have no desire to circle back to the discussion that was held yesterday—we find it necessary to cite some facts that are fundamental for understanding the Venezuelan context.

For years now, our country has been facing a series of aggressions of a specific nature—attempted coups, the sabotage of its public services, the siege of its economy, attacks against its currency, and the freezing of its financial institutions. Long before the sanctions imposed against our country were made public, the process had already begun, making commercial exchange and economic development impossible, hindering the acquisition of goods and services such as food, medicine, medical equipment, and other things that are vital for the public and the sustainment of our most important national industry, the petroleum industry, which is a fundamental pillar of our economy.

More recently, our country has become the victim of a policy to confiscate our assets and freeze the accounts of our country for nearly 30 billion dollars. This is why I referred yesterday to what was done in the Middle Ages, when cities were surrounded until they surrendered—this is exactly what they are trying to do against our country. Under the false pretext of bringing “humanitarian aid”, they are robbing us of 30 billion dollars to later generously send us 20 million under the pretext of this “humanitarian crisis” and the existence of an “illegitimate government”.

On this point, it stands to recall that the Government of citizen Nicolás Maduro Moros was elected by a popular vote that was free, sovereign, and democratic, in a process set out in our Constitution, and with an automated electoral system recognised by many as one of the most accurate and secure in the world, as indicated by the Carter Center and that very same ex-President of the United States of America, Jimmy Carter, who participated as an international observer at many of the over 26 electoral processes that have been carried out in our country over the past 20 years.

It is the same system, the same rules, and the same authorities that gave the victory to the opposition and was recognised as such. These are the same rules, the same authorities, and the same system that awarded victory to President Nicolás Maduro at the May 2018 elections, with 67 per cent of the vote. As such, this result is as legitimate as prior results. It is also worth recalling that opposition candidates also participated in this electoral process, and one such candidate is now proclaiming himself president without having been elected to that post and without the Constitution—at least in Venezuela—granting him the authority to do so, as some have falsely and equivocally alleged.

President Maduro has reiterated once more his call for peace, for a political dialogue, and for respect of the rule of law, because peace is the fundamental value that we—not only Venezuelans, but all of the countries of the world, and especially our brothers in the region—must preserve. A war of fratricide brings only death, pain, destruction, and stops progress.

No intervention in the world has contributed to solving the problems in those countries, whose crisis concern. To the contrary, they have only exacerbated the situation, and the after effects still persist to this day.

As a Member State of the United Nations, Venezuela defends unconditional respect for the Charter of the United Nations, international law, the principle of equality among States, and the non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, as well as self-determination, liberty, and democracy; it advocates adherence to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and, of course, the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is the founding document of this Organisation.

As such, I am speaking to you as the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the OPCW since 11 March 2011, the date on which I submitted my credentials to this Organisation, and I will continue to represent the Venezuelan State at this Organisation in strict compliance with the legal framework already mentioned.

The solution to Venezuela's problems should only come from a political dialogue and a peaceful resolution of the differences among Venezuelans, without any foreign interference or any coaching from any foreign power, much less a military intervention, as has been mentioned repeatedly by the governments that are attacking us today.

Finally, I would like to kindly request that this statement be considered an official document of the Ninetieth Session of the Executive Council and published on the website and external server of the Organisation.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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