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CUBA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SORAYA ÁLVAREZ NÚÑEZ
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CUBA TO THE OPCW
AT THE TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General, Distinguished Delegates,

The Cuban delegation welcomes His Excellency Mr Krassimir Kostov, Ambassador of Bulgaria, as Chairperson of the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, as well as the newly elected Vice-Chairpersons; we wish them every success in their roles.

The implementation of the provisions in the Chemical Weapons Convention by the Republic of Cuba is proof of Cuba's firm and consistent position in favour of the prohibition and total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, as well as its commitment to the important work of the OPCW and safeguarding the letter and spirit of the Convention.

We reiterate the need for the United States—the only State Party in possession of chemical weapons—to fulfil its destruction plans in a secure and expeditious manner in accordance with the provisions set out in the Convention, its Verification Annex, and the relevant decisions adopted by the States Parties.

The delegation of Cuba aligns itself with the speech delivered by His Excellency Mr Jafar Huseynzada, Acting Director of the Department of Political and Military Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, on behalf of the States of the Non-Aligned Movement and China that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to and recognition of the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, H.E. Ambassador Haifa Aissami Madah, for her dedication, professionalism, and the results achieved during the coordination of the Non-Aligned Movement and China within the OPCW over the period from 2016 to 2019.

We highlight the commitment and activism of the countries in the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Convention, and their support for the OPCW. Examples include the most recent proposal presented by the Non-Aligned Movement and China to establish an open-ended working group to consider the issues that are most relevant for the future of the OPCW and that may be supported by a consensus, and the proposals aimed at strengthening the facilitation mechanism. The delegation of Cuba hopes that facilitation work will be able to begin soon and incorporate a set of agreed criteria for the new mechanism, with a view to



holistically consider the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all of the provisions of the Convention.

The OPCW's policy-making organs should continue to put into place the conditions needed to ensure a successful outcome for the Fifth Review Conference. Failure to do so would have a negative impact on the future relevance of the Organisation and the ability to maintain general and complete disarmament under strict international control. For this reason, it is imperative that the working and decision-making methods within the policy-making organs are improved in order to ensure inclusion, transparency, and the non-politicisation of its discussions. In that regard, the mechanism aimed at strengthening facilitations, like any other, should be systemically integrated with the policy-making organs via a system of information, assessment, and feedback that will make it possible to address in an equal manner all outstanding issues concerning implementation, as well as issues that can be improved within the mandate of the Convention.

With regard to the Organisation's draft Programme and Budget for 2020, we reiterate the following elements: the importance of returning to explicitly mentioning the concept of zero nominal growth in the document; the need to draft guidelines or criteria for the establishment of the Organisation's currently numerous funds and special accounts; the maintenance of procedures for adopting separate decisions on each of the subjects comprising the Programme and Budget rather than via only one omnibus decision, as the latter mixes topics of a different nature and scope, both in terms of procedure and substance; and, the need to dedicate more space in order to achieve a consensus, particularly when it comes to the adoption of the Organisation's Programme and Budget.

With regard to the progress made in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, the Cuban delegation acknowledges the cooperation maintained by the Syrian Arab Republic and the Technical Secretariat; we are counting on its continuance, and we reiterate that any interaction with said State Party is to be conducted—as with any other State Party—without any outside interference, and with full respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and with the consent of its legitimate authorities.

We must avoid the increasing, dangerous trends toward contaminating the Organisation's mandate and the implementation of initiatives that extend beyond the scope of that mandate, and eschew broad interpretations of the Convention that do not enjoy a consensus among the States Parties.

The pillars of the Convention have yet to be fully implemented. In this regard, the Cuban delegation urges all State Parties to work together. We reiterate the need to achieve tangible results from the implementation of Article XI on the economic and technological development of the States Parties; it is one of the pillars of the Convention for which implementation continues to be downgraded, even though it represents a major incentive for an overwhelming majority of the States Parties. The decision adopted at the Sixteenth Conference of the States Parties in 2011 (C-16/DEC.10), and later reflected in subsequent documents prepared at each annual workshop, as well as the results of the Third Review Conference and national contributions, all provide sufficient information, guidelines, and proposals for establishing the measures necessary to implement this article.

Within this context, the imposition of unilateral coercive measures of an extraterritorial nature contradicts the provisions of Article XI of the Convention. Cuba denounces in the

strongest possible terms the violation by the Government of the United States of America of several provisions of the aforementioned article by its imposition of the economic, commercial, and financial embargo against Cuba; this embargo is not only still in effect, it continues to be made more stringent, leading to the severe restriction of Cuba's opportunities to access international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under this Convention.

This past 7 November, for the for the twenty-eighth consecutive time, the overwhelming majority of the international community denounced the blockade and demanded that it be lifted: 187 countries of the United Nations General Assembly voted in favour of the resolution on the need to end the economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. We express our gratitude for the support of all of the States that demanded the cessation of this policy, which is unilateral, obsolete, and destined to fail.

In closing, my delegation wishes to express that Cuba is willing to continue providing its support and experience in the implementation of activities and general obligations within the context of activities that are not prohibited under the Convention, as well as national implementation measures, assistance and protection against chemical weapons, and international cooperation in general.

I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and published on the external server of the OPCW.

Thank you.

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