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SPAIN

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MARÍA J. ALONSO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SPAIN TO THE OPCW
AT THE TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,

Spain aligns itself with the statement read by Ambassador Mika-Markus Leinonen on behalf of the European Union.

First of all, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Chairperson of this Conference of the States Parties and guarantee that you will have the Spain's collaboration in the effective performance of your duties. I would like to reiterate my country's gratitude for Ambassador Yun-young Lee of Korea for his work as Chairperson of the Twenty-Third Session of the Conference. I would also like to thank the Chairperson of the Executive Council, Ambassador Andrea Perugini, for his valuable work in preparing for this Conference.

I would also once again express our gratitude for the co-facilitators, Ambassador Puja of Indonesia, and Ambassador Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador, for their tireless efforts to revitalise the framework of facilitation.

Spain very highly values and welcomes Director-General Mr Fernando Arias and his opening statement, and reiterates its continued support for his work and efforts, as well as the professionalism, objectivity, and competency of the Technical Secretariat.

Please allow me to recall that today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and within this context I cannot help but note that it is the civil population, and primarily women and children, who are the main victims of states of emergency and conflict situations, and they who have suffered most from the lethal consequences of the use of chemical weapons.

The relatively short existence of the OPCW is likely the best example of multilateralism in recent history. The simple enumeration of some dates and figures to summarise the activities of the Organisation in its nearly 30 years of existence (the destruction of 98% of declared stockpiles, 193 States Parties to the Convention, the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013, etcetera) demonstrates an unprecedented success in the history of international relations. The OPCW is a modern organisation based on trust and that is capable of adopting majority-based decisions. It has been and continues to be valuable, not only in and of itself, but also as a model for the non-proliferation regime. But we are also entering a stage of growth in the life



of the Organisation that, as in any other stage of life, is not without crises. The future of the OPCW will be determined not only by its present ability to confront the risks of re-emergence and the continued use of chemical weapons, but also by the inevitable need, in this context, for new mechanisms that will make it possible to take on the functions of prevention and deterrence. By this logic, between actual capacities and pressing needs relating to the threats of re-emergence and continued use of chemical weapons, we also see the establishment, in June 2018, of the attribution mechanism.

Since the beginning, Spain has been committed to the OCPW. In fact, in 1994 Spain became the first State of the European Union and the fourth of the 193 signatory States to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention. Since then, my country has been an active and loyal member, both in terms of its relations with the Organisation as well as with the States that comprise it. Examples of this commitment are the efforts made by Spain in training activities, in collaboration on numerous occasions with the OPCW Technical Secretariat, as well as informative, with the objective of achieving the universality and implementation of the Convention. It is not only a matter of pride, but also a testimony to Spain's deep conviction that the proliferation and use of chemical weapons is completely unacceptable in any place, at any moment, and under any circumstance, or for any reason, and that those responsible for violating this rule must be held accountable for their actions. For this reason, Spain has firmly supported the instruments that the Organisation has established for the effective implementation of these obligations, specifically the aforementioned attribution mechanism established at the Fourth Review Conference.

Spain highly values the work of the Fact-Finding Mission and the Declaration Assessment Team and hopes that the first report from the Investigation and Identification Team will contribute to the clarification of the attacks with chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. We request the full cooperation of the authorities in Damascus with the OPCW and we wish to underscore the laudable commitment of Director-General Fernando Arias and his support for the Syrian authorities in meeting their obligations.

Spain will return as a member of the Executive Council next May. From this position, my country will continue to work intensely to safeguard the objectives of the Convention. Furthermore, Spain will provide all necessary support to the Technical Secretariat and Director-General Fernando Arias, both in their daily work as well as in their mid- and long-term planning efforts.

Spain is perfectly aware that the OPCW needs the financial strength corresponding to the type of dynamic organisation that it is. For this reason, we will be voting in favour of the draft Programme and Budget presented by the Director-General and adopted by the most recent Executive Council. Likewise, we call upon other Member States to lend their vote to a budget that will guarantee the continuation of the OPCW's work and that will be a flexible instrument allowing the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat to effectively address the new challenges that the Organisation is facing. Please allow me to add, Mr Chairperson, that Spain trusts that starting next year, the budget will be biennial.

With regard to capacity building, our Organisation must also confront the constant challenge of new technologies. The convergence of risks, the speed with which advances are made, and the difficulty of prediction pushes us to increase, within the terms of the Convention, a culture of chemical security. For this reason, we are in favour of continued review, in part by the OPCW's Scientific Advisory Board and by temporary working groups, of new scientific and technological developments that could affect the purposes of the Convention.

In this regard, among the subjects that are being submitted for consideration by this Conference, there is the update to the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention. Spain supports the draft proposal submitted jointly by Canada, the United States, and the Netherlands, as well as the new Russian proposal to modify this Annex. We trust that this agreement to update the Annex will be achieved by consensus.

Within the framework of guaranteeing a culture of chemical security, it is also critical that the OPCW Laboratory, the flagship of this Organisation, continues to serve as a point of reference. In this regard, Spain is contributing financially to the transformation of the OPCW Laboratory into the Centre for Chemistry and Technology, both in our capacity as members of the European Union as well as within the framework of our bilateral capacity. We call upon all States Parties to support and contribute to this project with the aim of strengthening the Organisation's capacities and helping to improve the implementation of the essential functions of verification and inspection.

Spain will also continue to contribute to strengthening the OPCW's network of Spanish-speaking laboratories. Our reference centre, LAVEMA, has been involved in working toward this goal for decades through training courses, workshops, and bilateral visits.

Spain, a world leader in fostering gender parity policies, believes it is critical to incorporate the issue of gender in all of the initiatives concerning weapons control and disarmament. In this regard, we urge the Director-General to continue improving the gender balance within the Technical Secretariat, always based on professional and transparent criteria in the selection process.

Finally, Mr Chairperson, I would like to reiterate Spain's commitment to the participation and cooperation of civil society, the chemical industry, think tanks, and non-governmental organisations, in the development of the work of this Organisation and their contribution to its success as it carries out its functions. For this reason, Mr Chairperson, Spain aligns itself with the joint statement on the accreditation of NGOs at this Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference.

Tackling the OPCW's challenges is crucial for the existence of our Organisation; this requires redoubled generosity on the party of Member States. This means not only financial generosity, but also political generosity toward overcoming any misgivings and suspicions by finding common ground. In closing, Mr Chairperson, Spain trusts that this Conference will contribute to maintaining the OPCW prepared to continue being an irreplaceable pillar of the international non-proliferation regime.

Spain requests that this statement be considered an official document of this Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference and published on the Organisation's website.

Thank you.

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