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CUBA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. SORAYA ÁLVAREZ NÚÑEZ
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General, Distinguished Delegates,

The Cuban delegation congratulates the new Chairperson of the OPCW Executive Council, H.E. Agustín Vásquez Gómez, Ambassador of El Salvador, and expresses its trust in his professionalism and successful performance. At the same time, I would like to voice appreciation for the efforts made by the Director-General of the OPCW and Ambassador Vásquez Gómez for the conduct of this session of the Executive Council. We believe that the present procedures put in place due to the exceptional circumstances triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic should be limited to this session. This should not set a precedent for the future work of this body or for the Organisation.

We align ourselves with the statement communicated by H.E. Mr Fikrat Akhundov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on behalf of the countries that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

We note the report on the status of implementation of the Convention for the year 2019 (EC-94/CRP.1, dated 3 June 2020), which indicates that the verification of approximately 2.49 per cent of the destruction of category 1 chemical weapons is still pending, and an increase in progress of just 0.87 per cent, compared to the numbers from 2018. We reiterate our call for the United States, the only remaining possessor-State, to finalise its destruction process safely and expeditiously, in line with the provisions of the Convention, its Verification Annex, and in full compliance with the relevant decisions that have been adopted.

With regard to international cooperation, which continues to pose an important challenge to the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all of the pillars of the Convention, the Cuban delegation would refer to the Technical Secretariat's Note S/1876/2020, dated 3 June 2020, which provides an update on the impact of COVID-19 on the OPCW in 2020. While we recognise and are appreciative of the efforts undertaken by the International Cooperation and Assistance Division to carry out training activities in an online format due to the circumstances of the aforementioned pandemic, we wish to point out that these should not replace face-to-face training modalities in future due to, among other things, the technical requirements needed for the training courses and the difficulties related to access and connectivity that they pose for developing countries. The digital platforms used to provide these activities should guarantee participation and full access for all States Parties at



all times, without discrimination and with equal conditions, in addition to bearing in mind requirements for the due level of security and confidentiality required in each case.

Concerning the treatment of the international cooperation and assistance programmes indicated in the above-specified Note by the Technical Secretariat, we wish to underscore that it is of great importance to preserve financial and other resources allocated for this important area, with a view to carry out all of the activities planned for 2020 as long as security conditions permit doing so; these include, among others, the annual review and evaluation workshop on the “Components of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI” (C-16/DEC.10, dated 1 December 2011).

The economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed by the Government of the United States against Cuba for more than half a century constitutes the primary obstacle for the sustainable and technological development of my country, and is a flagrant violation of the purposes and principles of international law, as set out in the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the provisions of Article XI of the Convention, and its object and purpose. This policy obstructs international cooperation in the areas that fall within the OPCW’s purview: science and capacity building, as well as access to equipment and the components thereof, chemicals, and scientific and technical information for the development of chemistry for purposes not prohibited by the Convention. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States persists in its intent to asphyxiate Cuba by escalating its policy, which is distinctly extra-territorial in nature and includes non-conventional methods, including in the field of industrial chemistry and pharmaceuticals. The embargo is the main obstacle preventing access to medicines, disinfectant materials, and other substances, as well as medical equipment and supplies that are critical for the country if it is to effectively confront this dangerous illness that affects us all.

The Cuban delegation again condemns this situation facing the Organisation and demands that this State Party, as part of national implementation of the Convention, adopt the necessary legislative measures by revising its existing national regulations applicable to the trade of chemical products to ensure that they are aligned with the object and purpose of this Convention.

We reiterate our concern regarding the growing and dangerous trends aimed at distorting the mandate of the OPCW, the implementation of initiatives that reach beyond that mandate, and broad interpretations of the Convention, which do not enjoy a consensus among the States Parties. We recognise the ongoing cooperation of the Syrian Arab Republic with the Technical Secretariat, and we hope that this is maintained—without any external interference and with full respect for the territorial sovereignty and integrity of said country, and with the agreement of its legitimate authorities.

With regard to the proposal to modify the Regulations of the Advisory Board on Administrative and Financial Matters (ABAF), the Cuban delegation supports the principle of the legitimate right of the States Parties to nominate the candidates who they believe meet the professional requirements and who will allow them to fulfil the mandate of this Body. This is a matter for which we must avoid any politicisation or the setting of any negative precedent for the multilateral system.

I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Ninety-Fourth Session of the OPCW Executive Council and published on its external website.

Thank you.