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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 NINETY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

The Venezuelan delegation wishes to express its solidarity with all of the victims of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world, and hopes for the speedy, full recovery of those who continue to fight for their lives.

As this is the first time that H.E. Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of El Salvador, is taking on the work of running the Ninety-Fourth Session of the Executive Council as its Chairperson, the Venezuelan delegation congratulates him on his election and assures him of its commitment to work in a dedicated manner for the common goals of the Organisation. We also wish to express our gratitude to H.E. Ambassador Andrea Perugini, Permanent Representative of the Italian Republic, for his work over the course of the past year as the Chairperson of the Executive Council.

Venezuela aligns itself with the statement communicated by the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries on behalf of GRULAC.

Likewise, we welcome and recognise the work of H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias and we welcome his reports, while also recognising the work of all of the members of the Technical Secretariat, especially in these difficult and complicated times.

Venezuela also aligns itself with the statement made by H.E. Ambassador Fikrat Akhundov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the OPCW, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China. We would like to address some issues in our national capacity.

Our country reaffirms the need to defend the principles set out in the Convention safeguarding the technical essence of this Organisation and preserving this important multilateral space for disarmament and the non-proliferation of the world's chemical weapons.

The implementation of some of the pillars of the Convention continues to be an outstanding issue within this Organisation. Venezuela reiterates the need to make progress and achieve specific goals in the implementation of the provisions set out in Article XI, with regard to the economic and technological development of States Parties, as this is one of the pillars of the Convention, the implementation of which continues to lag in spite of its importance for all States Parties.



We underscore the need to promote international cooperation for the benefit of all States Parties via the transfer of technology, material, and equipment for peaceful purposes in the field of chemistry, and the elimination of any discriminatory restrictions; in this regard we call for the rejection of all coercive, unilateral measures against other States Parties, which are contrary to the letter and spirit of the Convention, and which affect its long-term viability and have an adverse impact on the development of countries that, like our own, are seriously affected by such arbitrary and unilateral sanctions.

With respect to the elimination and destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons production facilities, we welcome the reports by the Director-General and recognise the cooperation maintained by the Syrian Arab Republic with the Technical Secretariat. At the same time, we reiterate our call for it to continue to do so successfully, without any type of external interference, and in strict accordance with Syria's territorial sovereignty and integrity.

Venezuela once again reiterates its principled position condemning in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals as weapons anywhere, by anyone, and under any circumstances.

With regard to the use of aerosolised central nervous system-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes, we find it absolutely imperative to continue these discussions and to address this issue from a constructive standpoint, and above all within the regulatory bodies of the Organisation. It is fundamental that all States Parties have sufficient information at hand, allowing them to become familiar with all of the technical and legal aspects before any specific action is taken. For this reason, we advocate for the search for a consensus and dialogue among all States Parties, which will allow us to create the conditions necessary to take consensus-based decisions as the way forward, without giving in to the temptation to force a vote that will only lead to greater polarisation within our Organisation.

As members of the Organisation, we express our profound concern about the situation that has developed at the heart of the OPCW following the publication of the first report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) on the incidents that took place in Ltamenah (Syrian Arab Republic) on 24, 25, and 30 March 2017. Just as was noted at the time, the establishment of this attribution mechanism reaches beyond the mandate assigned to the OPCW and is a violation of the provisions of the Convention, usurping the exclusive authorities of the United Nations Security Council.

Within this context, our efforts should be aimed at improving the effectiveness of the OPCW's activities in terms of addressing cases of alleged use of chemical weapons; it is imperative that all approaches are effected strictly within the framework of this Convention. This concerns the maintenance and fortification of this highly important multilateral instrument in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament.

Finally, I kindly request, Mr Chairperson, that this statement be considered an official document of the Ninety-Fourth Session of the Executive Council and published on the Organisation's website.

Thank you for your kind attention.