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CUBA

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

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

The Cuban delegation welcomes and wishes every success to the Chairperson of the OPCW Executive Council, H.E. Mr Agustín Vásquez Gómez, who continues to carry out his duties under the complex and extraordinary conditions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Cuban delegation aligns itself with the statement made by His Excellency Mr Fikrat Akhundov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement of countries that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China.

The Cuban delegation has noted the procedures for holding the Ninety-Fifth Session of the Executive Council, which must be considered exceptional and should not set a precedent for the future or be interpreted as modifications of the Council's rules.

We recognise the flexibility and cooperation that is once again demonstrated by the States Parties, especially on the part of observer States, in an effort to overcome certain challenges facing their participation due to the exceptional procedures put in place.

We welcome the efforts made by the Technical Secretariat to make this session happen, as well as the arrangements put into place for implementing Council Regulations. We call for continued exploration of ways to update the live transmission of sessions to a bidirectional system in order to guarantee that all States Parties will be able to interact in the work of the Executive Council in real time.

Cuba reiterates its position on the long-term principles aimed at the achievement of total and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, including the prohibition and elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. We reiterate our appeal to the possessor State to finalise said destruction process in an expedited and secure manner, in line with the provisions of the Convention, its Verification Annex, and fully in line with the relevant decisions that have been adopted.



The Cuban delegation emphasises that the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals as weapons anywhere, by anyone, and under any circumstances is unacceptable and completely contrary to the provisions of the Convention, legal norms, and international law.

Cuba reiterates the importance of the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all of the provisions of the Convention.

The Cuban delegation will continue to insist that the Organisation must strengthen trust among States Parties and maintain the tradition of taking decisions based on consensus, thus preventing any rushed actions. The adoption of decisions by vote is an exercise that only leads to confrontation and the detriment of the authority and interests of the OPCW in the long term.

With regard to international cooperation and assistance, as one of the pillars of the Convention, there continue to be important challenges for Cuba and for the majority of the States Parties of the OPCW.

As we recognise and welcome the efforts that the Division tasked with these matters is making in order to continue training activities, especially in the exceptional conditions resulting from the aforementioned pandemic, including with the use of digital modalities, we find that in future there should also be additional modalities that are complementary to existing activities. The Technical Secretariat should receive the resources it needs to guarantee the equality of the conditions for the participation of all States Parties in these activities and in line with the Organisation's security and confidentiality requirements.

Likewise, this coming 2 November, we urge the States Parties taking part in the Annual Review and evaluation workshop of the components of an agreed framework for the full implementation of Article XI in line with decision C-16/DEC.10, dated 1 December 2011, in order to continue a constructive dialogue with all States Parties within the framework that this annual workshop offers to promote the economic and technological development of the States Parties and international cooperation.

We support the establishment of a review committee within the framework of the facilitation of Article XI in order to simplify the list of ideas that are emerging from the review workshops and the evaluation of the components of the agreed framework; in that regard, we urge the regional groups that have yet to do so, to nominate their representatives to said Committee, so that it can get an early start.

Article XI of the Convention promotes the economic and technological development of the States Parties and prohibits the imposition of any restrictions limiting or creating a hindrance to business, the development and promotion of scientific and technological knowledge in the field of chemistry for industrial, agricultural, investigative, medical, pharmaceutical, and other peaceful purposes, and stipulates a commitment to examining national norms relevant to the trade of chemicals in order to ensure that they are compatible with the object and purpose of the Convention.

The Cuban delegation once again denounces the lack of progress in national implementation of Article XI of the Convention by the United States of America, and denounces the imposition of coercive, unilateral measures, which are extra-territorial in nature, via an economic, financial, and commercial embargo against Cuba for over 60 years.

The genocidal nature of this policy has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and has been the primary obstacle to obtaining medications, reagents, diagnostic kits, protective gear, disinfectants, and other substances, equipment, and medical supplies that the country needs to effectively tackle this dangerous illness that affects us all.

We demand that an end be put to this policy and that the requisite legislative measures be adopted in line with Article XI in alignment with the object and purpose of the Convention.

The Cuban delegation encourages and supports the work of the facilitators on matters of governance and believes that unhurried, responsible reflection on outstanding issues within their mandates will help lead, step by step, to a consensus on a number of matters that are very important for the OPCW's operation, as well as the progressive activation of the various existing facilitations that respond to current priorities and other issues that have been postponed within the Organisation.

The Cuban delegation welcomes the appointment of H.E. Vusumizi Philemon Madonsela of South Africa as Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and wishes him every success in this role.

The Cuban delegation expresses its concern about any intent to accuse States Parties of using chemical weapons based on allegations made in the media or any other open source that are not in line with OPCW procedure.

Likewise, the Cuban delegation calls for maintaining and broadening the cooperation that was upheld between the Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic, without any external interference and with full respect for its sovereignty.

The Cuban delegation expresses its support for the project to establish the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology, and congratulates the Director-General for the important steps made to advance the start of its construction in record time; it expresses its appreciation for the States Parties that, having the ability to do so, have generously offered material support.

Cuba expresses its willingness to support in the future the functioning and vitality of this important Centre by offering experts and exchanging experience. Without a doubt, this Centre will be able to strengthen the Technical Secretariat's scientific and technological abilities, as well as capacity-building abilities for the States Parties.

We urge the States Parties to continue supporting the establishment of this Centre and to initiate the consideration of its mandate, structure, and principles of operation with the OPCW's regulatory bodies in full alignment with the object and purpose of the Convention.

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

Thank you.