



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Twenty-Fifth Session
30 November – 1 December 2020 (Part I)

C-25/NAT.43
30 November 2020
ENGLISH and SPANISH only

COLOMBIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ÁLVARO ANDRÉS MOTTA NAVAS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

I will begin my statement by welcoming Ambassador José Antonio Zabalgaitia Trejo, Chairperson of this Conference, while also expressing my sincere hopes for the success of its work. I also recognise Ambassador Krasimir Kostov for the work that he has completed. Likewise, I would like to extend my greetings to the rest of the members of the Bureau.

I extend a special greeting to Ambassador Fernando Arias, Director-General of the Organisation, and highlight his exemplary leadership at the helm of the Technical Secretariat. I extend a warm welcome to each of the people working at the Technical Secretariat, who have contributed to accomplishing the mission and objectives of the Organisation.

Based on the mandate set out in its Constitution, Colombia reaffirms its commitment to the universal destruction of chemical weapons, and condemns the use thereof in any situation, under any circumstances, and by anyone; we underscore the need to have the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons fully identified.

My country supports the universality of the Convention, which is a crucial tool for disarmament and non-proliferation and, in general, for maintaining global peace and security. We emphasise that today, there are 193 States Parties to the Convention, which means that 98 per cent of the global population lives under the protection provided by this international tool. In this regard, we call upon the States Parties that are not yet part of the Convention to accede thereto.

In implementing Article VII, Colombia expresses its gratitude to the Technical Secretariat for the accurate and timely work supporting the Member States of the Organisation in their processes to adopt national implementation measures under the Convention. Likewise, my country invites States Parties to continue advancing in the process of adopting these measures, and expresses its willingness to contribute to the support that may be needed within the framework of its institutional system.

With regard to Article X, Colombia would like to underscore its role as a strategic partner for the OPCW and regional leader in assistance and protection. Over the past five years, Colombia has hosted a variety of regional courses and exercises, and as a result approximately 135 officials,



representing 17 countries in the region, have been trained in matters related to the response to chemical incidents and emergencies. Colombia expresses its interest in continuing this collaborative work with the Organisation.

Colombia reiterates its support for the provisions set out in Article XI of the Convention related to cooperation and economic and technological development; these are crucial issues for developing countries due to the various implications across a broad range of areas. In this regard, we welcome the work carried out by the Technical Secretariat and encourage the continued implementation of actions aimed at strengthening and improving national and regional capacities supporting the peaceful use of chemistry.

For Colombia, the near universality that the Convention currently enjoys must absolutely be translated into zero incidents involving chemical weapons in the world.

In this regard, while we reiterate our support for the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) and welcome the release of its first report (S/1867/2020, dated 8 April 2020), Colombia expresses its concern surrounding the facts set out in this report, which established that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force used chemical weapons in three attacks that took place in the city of Ltamenah (Syria) on 24, 25, and 30 March 2017.

Colombia calls upon the Syrian Arab Republic to strengthen cooperation with the Technical Secretariat in order to clarify the various incidents and attacks that have taken place on its territory, and in relation to the discrepancies identified in its initial declaration.

We avail ourselves of this opportunity to reiterate our support for the work of the missions of the OPCW in the Syrian Arab Republic, including the Fact-Finding Mission and the Declaration Assessment Team. My country reaffirms its vote of confidence in the impartial and professional work that the Organisation is carrying out.

On this same note, Colombia expresses its concern surrounding the events that took place in the month of August 2020, in which Mr Alexei Navalny was poisoned through the use of a nerve agent. This incident is a violation of the provisions set out in the Convention and, as such, Colombia underscores the importance of conducting an investigation that will make it possible to clarify what took place.

Moving to the work of this Conference, Colombia expresses its support for the 2021 Programme and Budget, and welcomes the news that the zero nominal-growth policy will be maintained for the contributions of States Parties.

On this matter in particular, Colombia would like to bring attention to the decision on financing a portion of international cooperation activities via the establishment of a special fund entitled the "COVID-19 Variability Impact Fund". Colombia notes that this figure will eventually provide the Organisation with the flexibility it needs to utilise resources in future in the event that they are not used in 2021. It is crucial that cooperation activities are regularly and securely financed, as they are the very essence of the Organisation's mission; the financing thereof should not be contingent upon the establishment of a special fund making it possible.

With regard to the election of the Organisation's External Auditor, Colombia expresses its interest in ensuring that the election is based on objective and technical criteria, thus making it possible to choose the candidate who provides the best service for the Organisation. In this regard, we believe that the formation of an integrated panel with Ambassadors representing all of the regional groups would be a positive tool in achieving this goal.

In conclusion, Colombia reaffirms its commitment to the provisions of the Convention and its trust in the impartial and professional work of the Organisation; in this regard, it expresses its resolve to continue working in a dedicated manner to search for a consensus and alternatives that will bring us to the accomplishment of our goal to completely rule out the possibility of the use of chemical weapons in the world.

I kindly request that this statement be considered an official document of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

Thank you.

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