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CUBA

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SORAYA ÁLVAREZ NÚÑEZ PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

The Cuban delegation welcomes the election of H.E. Mr José Antonio Zabalgoitia Trejo, Ambassador of Mexico, as Chairperson of this Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, as well as the new Vice-Presidents and other members of the General Committee. We wish you success in your duties.

The implementation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention by the Republic of Cuba is aligned with its firm and consistent position on principles in favour of the prohibition and total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. As a result, we reiterate the urgency of safeguarding its letter and spirit, in addition to our commitment to the important work of the OPCW.

Mr Chairperson,

We align ourselves with the statement voiced by H.E. Mr Fikrat Akhundov, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and China, which are States Parties to the Convention.

Extraordinary things have taken place since the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference. The COVID-19 pandemic, the devastating effects of which has left no country untouched, has impacted and limited the development of our work over the course of the entire year.

We recognise the flexibility and cooperation shown by the States Parties in conducting consultations and sessions of the Executive Council, which are clear demonstrations of their commitment to the OPCW and of the importance assigned to the implementation of its mandates. Nevertheless, we believe that all possible technical and procedural alternatives should be explored in line with the regulations of the Organisation, in order to ensure that the States are able to work and contribute on equal terms, without any detriment to our sovereign rights as Parties to the Convention.



We once again reiterate that the procedural adjustments that have been made and the modalities that have been implemented for developing the work of the OPCW must be considered only as exceptional measures that must not set a precedent for the future, or be interpreted as tactical modifications of the Organisation's regulations.

We insist upon the importance, even in these circumstances, of creating all the conditions for the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all the provisions of the Convention. The strengthening of all of the facilitations that address matters of special importance and relevance for the future of the Organisation will serve as an important tool and should be enhanced next year.

Mr Chairperson,

It is necessary that there be gradual improvement of working methods and of observance of existing procedure by the policy-making organs in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Convention, and in order to achieve inclusion and transparency, while avoiding the politicisation of the discussions that take place at the Organisation, in a manner that makes it possible for us to resume the practice of taking consensus-based decisions.

Mr Chairperson,

With regard to the progress made in eliminating the chemical weapons programme since the previous Conference, we reiterate the need to have the United States—the only possessor State Party—finalise its destruction plans as soon and safely as possible, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, its Verification Annex, and the relevant decisions adopted by the States Parties.

With regard to the elimination and destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and the destruction of production facilities, we recognise the cooperation maintained by the Syrian Arab Republic with the Technical Secretariat, and we are pleased to welcome the important efforts made toward resolving the outstanding issues over recent months and the achievements that have been made. We reiterate that any interaction with this State Party, just like with any other, must take place without external interference, and with full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and with the consent of its legitimate authorities.

We must avoid the growing tendency to contaminate and broaden the scope of the Convention with the implementation of initiatives that extend beyond it, that respond to dubious, extensive interpretations thereof, that do not have the support of a consensus among the States Parties, and, as such, require exhaustive discussions.

Concerning the Organisation's draft Programme and Budget for 2021, we reiterate the need to adopt separate decisions for each one of the items contained therein, in line with the OPCW's Financial Regulations. This has been the practice for over 20 years—not through the adoption of a single omnibus decision, which includes issues that are diverse in nature and scope, as well as both procedural issues and more in-depth matters. We recall the need to observe the existing rules and practices in a core issue such as this one, while also underscoring that a consensus cannot be used to impose decisions that do not have the support of all the States Parties. We are concerned to see a reduction in financial resources allocated for international cooperation in 2021.

The establishment of numerous special funds and accounts is a topic that should be analysed in future and should be regulated by the policy-making organs, via the development of directives for their establishment and administration, which will provide greater transparency and responsibility for all States Parties.

Progress in achieving the universality of the Convention, achieved in the majority of developing countries, confirms the need to advance in the establishment of an integral approach to international cooperation and assistance for the present and the future of the OPCW, given its tangible benefits for all States Parties.

We recognise the efforts made over the past year by the Technical Secretariat, especially by the International Cooperation and Assistance Division, to maintain the vitality of some of the training programmes via the use of information and communications technology, and was thus able to successfully hold—within current limitations—the annual workshop on the implementation of decision C-16/DEC.10 this past 2 November 2020. That notwithstanding, we call for the provision of adequate programmes and resources for the full implementation of Article XI of the Convention regarding the economic and technological development of the States Parties, which represents a need and forms part of the Organisation’s priorities.

We welcome in particular the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and China requesting that the Technical Secretariat present a report on the comprehensive implementation of decision C-16/DEC.10, dated 1 December 2011. The identification of any gaps or unresolved matters for full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation will help set out a structure for the discussion and identification of practical measures that should be taken by the OPCW and the States Parties in order to support economic and technological development.

Mr Chairperson,

There remains much to do for the national implementation of Article XI by the States Parties, which stipulates a commitment to “[...] facilitate [...] the fullest possible exchange of chemicals, equipment and scientific and technical information relating to the development and application of chemistry for purposes not prohibited [under this Convention]”, and “[n]ot maintain among themselves any restrictions [...] which would restrict or impede trade and the development and promotion of scientific and technological knowledge in the field of chemistry for industrial, agricultural, research, medical, pharmaceutical or other peaceful purposes [...]”.

The application of the illegal economic, trade, and financial embargo imposed by the Government of the United States against Cuba, which is far-reaching and ratcheted up to unprecedented levels in the past year in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, contradicts and violates the provisions of Article XI of the Convention. The national document of the Republic of Cuba that was circulated as an official document of this Conference with the reference symbol C-25/Nat.56 and entitled “Report Addressed to the Conference of the States Parties at its Twenty-Fifth Session on Fostering International Cooperation for Peaceful Purposes in the Field of Chemistry (Agenda Item 18)” sets out a variety of economic and humanitarian implications of this irrational, failed, and genocidal policy in the industrial sector of chemistry for purposes not prohibited by the Convention.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Cuba’s willingness to continue providing support and contributing its experience to the general activities and obligations in the field of activities

that are not prohibited by the Convention, national implementation measures, assistance and protection against chemical weapons, and international cooperation and assistance in general.

I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and published on the website and external server.

Thank you.

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