



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

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

C-25/NAT.68
30 November 2020
ENGLISH and SPANISH only

VENEZUELA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR HAIFA AISSAMI MADAH
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC
OF VENEZUELA TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

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

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

Our delegation welcomes and congratulates H.E. José Antonio Zabalgoitia Trejo, Permanent Representative of Mexico, as Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties; we also extend these congratulations to the new Vice-Chairpersons and other members of the Bureau. We wish them the greatest success in managing the work of this session, and we reiterate our commitment to working in a dedicated manner towards achieving the common goals of the Organisation.

Likewise, we extend our greetings to and recognition of the work of H.E. Fernando Arias, and we welcome his reports. We also express our recognition of the work of all of the members of the Technical Secretariat, especially in these difficult and complex times.

We would like to underscore the unprecedented way in which this session of the Conference is being held; like the session of the Executive Council, it is taking place under the extraordinary conditions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, we emphasise that these exceptions cannot set a precedent for the future work of our Organisation. Thus, we call to continue searching for more inclusive mechanisms and technological platforms that will make it possible for all States to participate on a level playing field without detriment to their rights, and while observing the public health and distancing regulations imposed by the pandemic.

Venezuela reiterates its commitment to the OPCW and reaffirms once again the need to defend the principles set out in the Convention, safeguarding the technical essence of this Organisation and preserving this multilateral space, which is so important for the disarmament and non-proliferation of chemical weapons in the world. This commitment is also demonstrated by the full compliance with its obligations as a State Party.



Venezuela aligns itself with the statement presented by H.E. Fikrat Akhundov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the OPCW, on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

We emphasise that the destruction of chemical weapons is the highest, most fundamental priority for the Organisation, which is why we insist that the United States of America, the only possessor State Party, accelerate all measures necessary to bring the destruction process for its declared stockpiles to a close in an expedited manner, in order to ensure its compliance with the provisions of the Convention and the relevant decisions of the Organisation's regulatory bodies.

With regard to the elimination and destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and the destruction of Syrian 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 and urge that this cooperation ought to continue successfully without any type of external interference, and in strict accordance with the territorial sovereignty and integrity of Syria.

With regard to the chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China, we urge all of the delegations to follow this matter, as it constitutes an important objective for this Organisation; its completion would not be possible without the cooperation of both countries.

The implementation of some of the pillars of the Convention continues to be an ongoing issue for this Organisation. Venezuela reiterates the need to make progress and make some concrete achievements in the implementation of the provisions of Article XI, with regard to the economic and technological development of the States Parties; this is one of the pillars of the Convention, the implementation of which continues to be delayed 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, as well as the elimination of any discriminatory restrictions. In this regard, we call for the rejection of unilateral coercive measures against other States Parties, which run contrary to the letter and spirit of the Convention and which affect its long-term viability, and have a negative impact on the development of countries that, like ours, are severely affected by such arbitrary and unilateral sanctions.

As a position of principle, Venezuela condemns in the strongest, most unequivocal terms the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals as weapons anywhere, by anyone, and under any circumstances.

Our country expresses its profound concern about the repeated existing practice of attempts to accuse States Parties of using chemical weapons based on unfounded accusations stemming from reports shared by some media outlets, social networks, or any other open source of information, including some non-governmental organisations. This trend could create a dangerous precedent for the future of the OPCW's work. The surge in such practices is absolutely unacceptable and should call for those engaged in such to reflect upon their actions.

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 taken be carried out strictly within the framework of this Convention. This concerns the maintenance and strengthening of the multilateral tool of such importance in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament.

The Programme and Budget is, without a doubt, a matter to which my country assigns great importance. For this reason, while we welcome the efforts of the Technical Secretariat and the co-facilitators for the presentation and the consultations carried out in this area, our delegation nonetheless wishes to reiterate once more some of the elements that we have addressed previously.

We believe that these initiatives are completely incompatible with the budgetary policy of zero nominal growth observed to date at the Organisation, which Venezuela fully supports, bearing in mind today's global economic realities, which have been compounded by the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is of the utmost importance to maintain the good practice established at this Organisation with regard to the procedure for the presentation and subsequent adoption of separate decisions on each one of the items in the OPCW Programme and Budget, and not as one single "omnibus" decision. We believe that for the sake of transparency and to facilitate timely decision making on this matter, issues of distinct nature should not be combined or summarised into only one "package".

With regard to the cash surplus from prior fiscal years, Venezuela expresses its wish that said funds be managed in strict compliance with the Organisation's financial regulations, and in each case attributed to the fees and contributions of our country. For this reason, we do not agree that it be allocated for a use other than what is provided for in the OPCW financial regulations.

We advocate for budgetary reallocation that would also incorporate a substantial increase for international cooperation, which contributes to economic and technological development for purposes not prohibited by the Convention, as well as the strengthening of the national capacities of the States Parties—all within the framework of the Convention and without sacrificing its essence or objectives.

For several years now, Venezuela has been facing a series of various aggressions: coup attempts, sabotage against its public services, a siege upon its economy, an attack upon its currency, and a blockade on its financial institutions. Long before unilateral coercive measures—now sanctions against our country—were made public, they were put into practice, making it impossible to engage in commercial exchange and develop our economy, impeding the acquisition of foodstuffs, medicines, medical equipment, goods, and services in general, which are fundamental for the population and the sustenance of our most important national industry—the petroleum industry, a fundamental pillar of our economy—compounded by a policy of confiscating our assets and freezing the accounts of our country in the amount of nearly 30 billion dollars.

Thus, our country reiterates its willingness to honour its financial commitments to the OPCW. In this regard, we recognise the good will of the Director-General in supporting the actions needed to establish, on the part of the Organisation and the Host Country, a mechanism or channel that would make it possible for our country to have a secure way to honour our financial commitments. Regrettably, to date these efforts have been fruitless due to the coercive unilateral measures that make it possible to engage in the regular processes used to execute these commitments. For all of these reasons, we reiterate our request for assistance, both to the relevant departments of the Technical Secretariat, as well as the national bodies of the Host Country, to make it possible for us to move forward and carry out the transfer of financial resources from our country to the Organisation.

Our delegation, in accordance with the provisions and principles that we have continually maintained throughout all of our statements, has insisted against politicising our discussions in order to preserve the eminently technical essence of the OPCW. For this reason, we support the search for a consensus and dialogue among all States Parties in order to create the conditions necessary to take consensus-based decisions to become the standard working practice, without succumbing to the temptation of forcing a vote that only leads to greater polarisation within our Organisation.

Finally, Mr Chairperson, I kindly request that this statement be considered an official document of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and published on the Organisation's website.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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