

FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL  
NATIONAL STATEMENT, by  
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EXECUTIVE COUNCIL – 97th SESSION  
OPCW

Mr. Chairperson,

Allow me to take this first opportunity to congratulate you, Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki, for the election as chairperson of this body. Your extensive experience and unique capabilities as a diplomat and negotiator will be a great asset to the Executive Council and the OPCW, in order to restore dialogue and to advance a positive agenda within the Organisation.

Brazil also extends its praise to the vice-chairpersons of the Council: Ambassador Andrés Terrán Parral, of Ecuador; Ambassador Gudrun Lingner, of Germany; Ambassador Alireza Kazemi Abadi, of Iran; and Ambassador Vidmantas Purlys, of Lithuania. We would like to assure you, Mr. Chairperson, and the Bureau, that you can count on the full support of the Brazilian delegation for the pursuit of our common endeavours.

We commend the DG, Ambassador Fernando Arias, for the efforts to continue pushing the OPCW's agenda forward, amidst the several limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The grateful recognition addressed to the DG is extensive to the DDG and the whole of the Technical Secretariat, for their professionalism and resilience, which has allowed us to keep moving ahead with hard work and creativity.

Mr. Chairperson,

Brazil strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons, anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances. Brazil notes with utmost concern that violations of the primary rule set out by the CWC, the prohibition of the use of toxic chemicals as weapons - regardless of whether they are listed in the annex or not - are still occurring, as reported by the Secretariat. Such incidents constitute violations of international law and serious threats to international security, and as such they must be addressed with transparency and subject to thorough, balanced and impartial investigations, in accordance with the Convention.

We believe that international cooperation is a primary tool to address such a global challenge. One of the pillars of the Chemical Weapons Convention, international cooperation is likely the shortest route to bring all the States Parties into full compliance with the rules set in it.

Likewise, in order to enable all the States Parties, especially the developing countries, to fully enjoy the benefits of the membership of this Organisation, it is paramount that we achieve a comprehensive implementation of the provisions dealing with cooperation and capacity building. The importance of such provisions, already evident during "normal" times, is highlighted by the consequences of the current pandemic.

We praise the Technical Secretariat for the efforts to overcome the current challenges by offering remote capacity-building activities. At the same time, we welcome its initiative to "build on, leverage, and integrate these successful recent experiences for its international cooperation and assistance programmes in the future, to supplement and complement - but not replace - the traditional in-person training formats".

Brazil is proud of its contribution to international cooperation under the Convention. We are also prepared to engage with the Secretariat in order to provide further cooperation, in areas such as the Mentorship Program for article VII (renewing previous successful experiences) and, in a new line of collaboration, in the training of inspectors.

Brazil also supports the upgrading of the OPCW laboratory into the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (Chemtech Centre, or CTC), in order to allow the Organization to keep pace with the latest technologies and scientific findings in the chemical field. The Chemtech Centre should be a platform for the dissemination of chemical knowledge for peaceful purposes and for addressing peace and security matters arising from the use of chemistry.

In that regard, we commend the Director-General for his dedicated efforts to keep the pace of the works to establish the CTC. The estimation that the foundation stone will be laid still this year, and that building will be completed by 2023, is particularly auspicious.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is paramount to provide the OPCW with the material means to implement the Convention. In that sense, the States Parties are due to soon engage with the Secretariat to discuss the "Program and Budget" for the next period. The scope of those debates this year will be enlarged, with the introduction of the biannual budget, as approved by the XXIV Conference of the States Parties.

In that connection, Brazil stresses, from the outset, our preference for a proposal which maintains the national assessed contributions within the range of "Zero Nominal Growth". This principle, which is dear to several delegations to the OPCW, gains particular relevance in the context of the current pandemic, whose full economic side-effects in our national economies are yet to be seen, but as of now cannot be ignored.

Also regarding the Programme and Budget for 2022-2023, we would like to once again reiterate that the reduction of resources earmarked in the regular budget

for international cooperation and assistance activities, as approved by the CSP-25, is a matter of great concern. In a spirit of compromise, Brazil has accepted the arrangement proposed by the Secretariat for the current year. That decision, however, was based on the understanding that such reduction has been a one-off measure taken in exceptional circumstances, and that it will by no means be considered as a new benchmark for future regular budgets.

In the same vein, regarding the report about transfers of funds during 2020 (note of the DG numbered EC-97/DG-12), it stands out that the International Cooperation and Assistance Programme has been drained of its budgetary resources at the rate of EUR 694.000,00. Unfortunately, that is a trend that has been ongoing for the past five years, and as such is also a matter of great concern. We urge the Secretariat and all the States Parties to bear in mind the legitimate claims of the developing countries for an always improving and enlarging international cooperation.

Mr. Chairperson,

Brazil notes the efforts of the States Parties and the Technical Secretariat to advance with the work of the facilitation on organizational governance issues. We congratulate Ambassadors Laura Dupuy, of Uruguay, and Matthew Neuhaus, of Australia, for their leading role, and thank them for the virtual meetings convened to push the process forward.

Recently, the States Parties were presented with a first draft of a decision to amend the OPCW tenure policy. Brazil agrees that some degree of flexibility should be given to the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat in the recruitment process, in order to ensure business continuity and high standards of service by the OPCW's staff.

When discussing the subject, the underlying considerations should be the desire of the States Parties to maintain the OPCW as a non-career organization, and the need to address certain issues such as the geographical imbalance currently observed. In that context, any exception to the current rules must be carefully weighted against the risks of perpetuating current imbalances. We look forward to receive and discuss the updated draft, which is due to include the inputs received from several States Parties, including Brazil.

In that context, Brazil stresses once again the importance of the universal character of the OPCW, which should count on staff representing the whole of its membership. It is of particular concern that GRULAC nationals, which amounted to only 6,3% of the whole Secretariat's staff in the "Annual Report on the Composition of the Secretariat" circulated last year (EC-94/DG.7), have been further reduced, to 5,8% in this year's report (EC-97/DG.9). In our view, it is high time for the Technical Secretariat to put in place dedicated policies aimed at fulfilling the mandate of art. VIII, 44 of the Convention.

Moreover, an equitable geographical distribution, as well as gender balance, should also guide the appointments to the subsidiary bodies. In their advisory

functions, they congregate the knowledge of experts who also bear distinctive world views and can contribute to enrich the discussions and the addressing of the issues at stake.

Mr. Chairperson,

Unfortunately, dangerous incidents with toxic chemicals, including industrial accidents and wrongful use by non-State actors, are recurrent. Thus, it is essential that states parties are prepared to provide assistance and protection against the use of chemical weapons or accidents related to chemical substances. As incidents of this kind may happen in any State Party, capacity-building activities should be encouraged in all regions. That also means enhancing laboratory capabilities. In this context, the extension of the OPCW designated laboratory network to Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean is of the essence. Brazil notes with great contentment that its aspiring institutions continue to perform well in their efforts towards designation.

Mr. Chairperson,

With the progressive improvement of the sanitary situation and the relaxation of the measures aimed at containing the COVID-19 pandemic, Brazil hopes that the next EC sessions can be held in more favourable circumstances. Until then, we are in favour of adjustments that allow the Executive Council to be prepared for sessions or meetings to be held virtually in emergency circumstances. We are looking forward to working constructively with the other States Parties, with a view to achieving consensus about this important issue.

Thank you.