



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

Ninety-Seventh Session

6 – 8 July 2021

EC-97/NAT.49

6 July 2021

ENGLISH and SPANISH only

## **GUATEMALA**

### **STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA TO THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

I would like to begin our statement by congratulating you on taking on the chairmanship of this Council, while also assuring you of the full cooperation of our delegation to ensure that under your leadership, we will be able to achieve the objectives set for this Ninety-Seventh Session of the Executive Council.

Guatemala aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Ambassador Fikrat Akhundov, on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China, with the exception of paragraph 15 of said statement.

My delegation aligns itself with and endorses all of the terms of the statement delivered by the regional coordinator of the States Parties from the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) within agenda item 11(f) and would like to state in our national capacity that we are extremely concerned by the information contained in the report by the Director-General regarding the make-up of the Technical Secretariat, which shows that the GRULAC region represents just 5.8% of hired staff members and is the least represented region within the Organisation. My delegation assigns special importance to the provisions set out in paragraph 44 of Article VIII of the Chemical Weapons Convention, where it stipulates, among other things, that “[d]ue regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible”. We call for the study of the procedures in place for hiring personnel in order to achieve balanced geographical distribution within the Organisation.

With regard to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, my delegation takes note of the reports of the Director-General (EC-97/DG.2 dated 24 March 2021, EC-97/DG.3 dated 23 April 2021, EC-97/DG.7 dated 25 May 2021, and EC-97/DG.15 dated 24 June 2021) and takes note of the national documents of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the activities related to the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons and production facilities. My delegation urges the Technical Secretariat to continue its dialogue with the Syrian National Authority on the outstanding issues concerning its initial declaration, and calls upon the Syrian Arab Republic to resolve these issues without delay.

My delegation is concerned by the conclusions made by the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) in its second report regarding the incident that took place in Saraqib (Syrian Arab Republic) on 4 February 2018, where the use of chemical weapons was once again confirmed



in Syrian territory. Furthermore, the report concludes that there were numerous reasonable grounds to believe that the responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in this incident lies with the Syrian Arab Air Force. Guatemala welcomes and supports the work of the Organisation's Technical Secretariat and the IIT, and reaffirms its condemnation of any use or threat of use of chemical weapons, regardless of who does it, and where or how it is done.

In addition to the above, we regret that the Syrian authorities continue to deny on-site access to the IIT, which is in breach of what is established in resolution 2118 (2013) of the United Nations Security Council and violates the commitment assumed under Article 25 of the United Nations Charter, via which it was agreed to accept and fulfil the decisions of the Security Council.

On another note, my delegation welcomes the Comptroller and Auditor General of India as the next External Auditor of the OPCW for the fiscal years 2021–2023 and also thanks you, Mr Chairperson, for your efforts during the intersessional period to establish a working group to develop a proposal on the manner of appointment by the Conference of the OPCW's future External Auditors, in line with Conference decision C-25/DEC.10, dated 21 April 2021.

Likewise, we take this opportunity to welcome the Organisation's work for the publication of the "Indicative Guidelines for Chemical Safety and Security in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises to Foster the Peaceful Uses of Chemistry", which was released on 29 June this year as a non-binding document, but one which provides concrete support for the chemical industry and also contributes to the promotion of the peaceful use of chemistry, the economic and technological development of the States, and the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

Mr Chairperson, we request that this statement be considered an official document of the Ninety-Seventh Session of the Council and published on the Organisation's extranet and website.

Thank you.

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