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VENEZUELA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR HAIFA AISSAMI MADAH
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BOLIVARIAN
REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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

The Venezuelan delegation would like to welcome H.E. Agustín Vásquez Gómez, Permanent Representative of the Republic of El Salvador, and once again welcome him at the forefront of leading the work of the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council, while reiterating our commitment to working in a dedicated manner towards the common objectives of the Organisation.

We also welcome and recognise the work of H.E. Fernando Arias and we thank him for his reports; we also express our recognition of the work of all of the members of the Technical Secretariat, particularly in this difficult and complex time.

We would like to once again address the irregularity of the way in which this Council is being convened, and note that just like past sessions of the Council, it is taking place in special circumstances stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. We underscore that these exceptional measures cannot serve as a precedent for the future work of our Organisation. At the same time, we call for continuing the search for more inclusive mechanisms, as well as platforms and technologies, that will permit participation that is equal in terms of conditions and interaction at the sessions of the Executive Council for all States Parties, including observer States, without restricting the ability to exercise their rights, and while observing the health and distance regulations put in place due to the pandemic.

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 Non-Aligned Movement and China.

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



With regard to the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons and the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons production facilities, we welcome the reports of the Director-General and recognise the cooperation maintained by the Syrian Arab Republic with the Technical Secretariat, while reiterating and calling for it to continue successfully, without any external interference, and in strict accordance with the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria.

Within the context of this Executive Council, it is important to recall that the implementation of some pillars of the Convention remain outstanding matters in this Organisation. Venezuela reiterates the need to advance and reach concrete achievements in the implementation of the provisions of Article XI, related 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.

Venezuela underlines the need to promote international cooperation for the benefit of all States Parties via the transfer of technology, materials, and equipment for peaceful purposes in the field of chemistry, as well as the elimination of any discriminatory restriction. In this regard, we call for rejecting the coercive unilateral measures against other States Parties, as they are contrary to the spirit and the letter of the Convention, affect its long-term viability, and negatively impact the development of countries that, like ours, are seriously affected by such arbitrary and unilateral sanctions.

The recent report published this past 12 February 2021, entitled: “Preliminary Findings from a Visit to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela of the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on the Negative Impact of Coercive Unilateral Measures on the Enjoyment of Human Rights”, clearly reflects the scope of these so-called sanctions, the impact of which transcends the borders of the country against which they are imposed; they constitute a violation of international rights, violate the principle of sovereign equality of the States, and constitute interference in the domestic affairs of Venezuela, which also affects its regional relations as well as its relations with various international organisations—this also includes the OPCW.

As we have stated previously within this forum, for a number of years now, Venezuela has been facing a series of aggressions that vary in nature, such as, among others, a siege upon its economy, an attack on its currency, and a blockade against its financial institutions as a consequence of the imposition of coercive, unilateral measures-cum-sanctions against the country, making commercial exchange and economic development impossible, impeding the acquisition of foods, medicines, medical equipment, and general goods and services, which are fundamental for the people and the maintenance of the national industry—the petrol industry in particular—a fundamental pillar of its economy, together with a policy of confiscating the country’s assets and freezing its accounts.

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 to support the actions necessary for the establishment, by the Organisation and the Host Country, of a mechanism or channel that will make it possible for our country to have a secure way in which to meet said financial commitments. Regrettably, until now, these efforts have been unproductive due to the coercive, unilateral measures that make the normal interactions to meet these commitments impossible. For all of these reasons, we reiterate our request for assistance, both to the relevant departments of the Technical Secretariat, as well as to the national entities of the Host Country to allow progress and facilitate the transfer of financial resources from our country to the Organisation.

The most vehement condemnation of the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals as a weapon anywhere, by anyone, and under any circumstance is a principled position of Venezuela.

Our country expresses its profound concern by the repeated existing practice of attempting to accuse States Parties of the use of chemical weapons based on unsubstantiated accusations made via reports divulged by certain media outlets, social networks, or any other open source of information, including some non-governmental entities. This trend could create a dangerous precedent for the future work of the OPCW.

Within this context, our efforts should be aimed at improving the effectiveness of the OPCW's activities in terms of addressing the cases of alleged use of chemical weapons, with the imperative that all approaches are taken strictly within the framework of this Convention. This concerns the maintenance and strengthening of the most important multilateral instrument in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament.

With regard to the use of aerosolised central nervous system-acting (CNS-acting) chemicals for law enforcement purposes, we find it unacceptable to continue discussions and debate this from a constructive stance particularly within the regulatory bodies of the Organisation. It is fundamental that all States Parties have sufficient information to help understand the scope of all of its technical and legal aspects before taking any specific action. For this reason, we advocate for searching for a consensus and dialogue among all the States Parties, which would make it possible to create the conditions necessary to take consensus-based decisions as the working formula, instead of giving in to the temptation of forcing a vote, which would only lead to greater polarisation within our Organisation.

With regard to the proposal to modify the Regulations of the Advisory Board for Administrative and Financial Matters (ABAF), my country advocates for respect for the legitimate and sovereign right that all States Parties have to nominate the candidates that they believe to possess the professional requisites to take on the mandate of this Body. At the same time, we support a consensus-based decision on this issue.

We once again reaffirm 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.

Finally, I kindly request, Mr Chairperson, that this statement be considered an official document of the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council and made available on the Organisation's website.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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