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**COSTA RICA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ARNOLDO BRENES CASTRO  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF COSTA RICA  
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION  
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,  
Mr Director-General,  
Distinguished delegates,

Costa Rica would like to congratulate H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen of Norway on his appointment as Chairperson of this Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. We reaffirm the Costa Rican delegation's support for and commitment to his management of our work.

We also express our recognition of Ambassador José Antonio Zabalgoitia Trejo of Mexico for his distinguished leadership as Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference, which was held in two parts, in December 2020 and April 2021. Both parts were held successfully, even with the restrictions in place due to the pandemic, which continues to be a reality that the international community must face with solidarity.

Costa Rica also expresses its gratitude to the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, and the team of the Technical Secretariat for the thorough, dedicated work carried out in implementing the Convention. Likewise, we applaud the professional, impartial, and independent work of the Technical Secretariat. Even with the extraordinary situation that we have been facing due to the pandemic, the prompt and efficient response from the entire team has made it possible to continue with scheduled activities and the implementation of the Organisation's programme of work. We firmly believe that with the adaptations required to take on the current context, we are gaining valuable lessons and good practices that will improve the Organisation's performance in future.

Costa Rica reiterates that the promotion and achievement of global disarmament is one of the key principles of our foreign policy. As a disarmed democracy that is loyal to its commitment to peace, we once again in this forum condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances.

Likewise, Costa Rica recalls the commitment of every State to meet its obligations of global chemical disarmament, without excuses and without delay, implementing the provisions of the Convention. As such, we advocate for the finalisation of the destruction of declared chemical weapons, in line with the time frames that have already been set out and in accordance with the commitments undertaken within the framework of the Convention.



We hope that this Convention can achieve universality and with it, contribute to international peace and security by completely ruling out any possibility of using chemical weapons at the global level. For this reason, we urge States not Party to ratify or accede to the Convention at once.

Costa Rica expresses its profound concern for the persistent lack of cooperation on the part of the Syrian Arab Republic in clarifying the weaknesses identified in its initial declaration, the hindrance of the work of OPCW staff through the denial of visas, as well as non-compliance with the obligations set out in the Convention and the decisions of the Executive Council, the Conference of the States Parties, and the Security Council. For this reason, we have observed with frustration the complete lack of willingness and openness in response to the numerous calls to cooperate with the Organisation and to fulfil its international obligations of chemical disarmament.

In this same vein, it is with great consternation that we witnessed in 2020 the use of chemical nerve agents in the novichok group in an attack perpetrated against Alexei Navalny as was confirmed by three OPCW designated laboratories. This crime must be investigated without excuses and without delay in order to prevent impunity. We regret that the circumstances of this reprehensible incident have not yet been clarified.

Costa Rica expresses its solidarity with the victims of the use of chemical weapons and, as a country that defends international law as the basis of international peace and security, it reiterates that it will continue to promote effective multilateralism for the strengthening of the regime of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Costa Rica extends a resounding call to ensure that we all ensure that the Convention continues to respond appropriately to new and emergent threats, while upholding human beings at the centre of our actions.

Costa Rica expresses its gratitude for and recognition of the work carried out by the facilitators of the various working groups on a number of issues. Their persevering drive to make concrete progress along the different pillars of the Convention is commendable and necessary in our mission towards a system of global chemical disarmament.

With regard to the establishment and development of capacities, the Organisation should continue to strengthen its programmes and expand opportunities in various areas related to national implementation measures, assistance and protection, and technological and economic development. Continued and updated training is crucial to ensure that all States Parties are able to carry out their obligations under the Convention effectively, while reaping the benefits of new developments in science and technology.

On this note, we reiterate Costa Rica's commitment to closer ties in international cooperation and technological and economic development, as well as to encouraging the use of chemistry for peaceful purposes, including programmes supporting women in chemistry and green chemistry.

Costa Rica has benefitted from cooperation within the framework of the OPCW and has also provided support in this area. In this regard, we would like to underscore the contribution of the Benemérito Fire Brigade of Costa Rica and the National Authority for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in holding an online course for first responders in emergencies from 21 to 25 June 2021, and organised by the authorities of Latin America and the Caribbean.

We would also highlight the importance that our country attributes to the actions taken to improve geographic diversity within the Organisation's staff, and we call for improving staff recruitment procedures to ensure that they are able to put into place measures aimed at achieving balanced diversity among different regions, including staff coming from GRULAC countries.

At this Conference, as States Parties we are preparing to adopt important decisions. Our delegation finds it fundamental to approve the Draft Programme and Budget for the 2022 – 2023 biennium in order to ensure the necessary resources for carrying out the Organisation's mandate. We are pleased that the moment for approving this first biennial budget has come, as it will contribute to improved planning and implementation of activities in the different pillars of work.

Likewise, Costa Rica joins the countries that are co-sponsors of the draft decision on the "Understanding Regarding the Aerosolised Use of Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes" and we support its approval at this Conference.

Costa Rica offers its congratulations on the draft decision that will make it possible to renew the mandate of Ambassador Fernando Arias at the head of the Organisation for the period of 2022 – 2026. We offer our full confidence and support for his impeccable work, and we predict the Organisation will be successful in the next four years. We call for the continued improvement of gender parity within the Organisation's staff across all levels and fields.

We were so pleased to attend the groundbreaking ceremony for the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre), which will soon become a reality. The solid progress made on this project demonstrates the centrality that we, as States Parties, assign to consolidating the future development of the Organisation, safeguarding knowledge associated with chemical disarmament, the central role of science, the potential of cooperation, capacity building, and its legacy in and support for global peace via the use of chemistry for peaceful purposes.

For Costa Rica, an investment in the ChemTech Centre is an investment in peace. It is an investment in the future of a strengthened Organisation in the regime of disarmament, without forgetting about our responsibility to remain prepared to stop the re-emergence of chemical weapons and the use thereof.

Costa Rica extends thanks to the countries that have contributed to this project, which will benefit the membership as a whole, and which will serve as a space that will enhance cooperation and capacity building.

We also have the Fifth Review Conference on the horizon, scheduled for April 2023. We have already lent our support to the preparations that will be undertaken in the year to come, when we will have the opportunity to mark a new milestone along the path towards strengthening chemical disarmament.

Mr Chairperson, thank you for your attention, and I request that this statement be considered an official document of the Conference and published on Catalyst and the website.

Thank you.