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GUATEMALA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JORGE SKINNER-KLÉE ARENALES
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,

I begin this statement expressing my sincere appreciation and recognition of the Ambassador of Mexico, H.E. José Antonio Zabalgotia Trejo, Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference, for his magnificent performance at the head of our work. Our region has been well represented by him.

At the same time, Mr Chairperson, I would like to welcome you upon your appointment as our Chairperson for this Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, and convey to you my respect and consideration, as well as the genuine commitment of providing the full collaboration of my delegation in contributing to your efforts in the management of our work and arriving at the desired results at the close of this Conference.

I welcome the Director-General, H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias, and his team, who I commend for continuing to work on the tasks assigned to them by the Convention and the Organisation's policy-making organs with vigour and tenacity. The States Parties especially welcome the efforts that have been invested in the preparation and development of our meeting, in spite of the obstacles we face due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Guatemala has aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement and China, delivered by H.E. Ambassador Fikrat Akhundov of the Republic of Azerbaijan, with the exception of paragraph 16 of said statement, from which we dissociate.

Guatemala wishes to reiterate its strongest possible condemnation of any use, or threat of use, of chemical weapons or toxic chemicals as weapons by anyone, anywhere, any time, and under any circumstance or justification. Likewise, we confirm that those responsible for such actions must be brought to justice.

In facing current threats, the regime under the Convention cannot be allowed to weaken via the ambivalent attitudes of our Organisation; for that reason, Guatemala calls for every action of the OPCW to be carried out in strict compliance with the provisions and standards that we have set ourselves as a legal framework, in a transparent manner and in good faith, so as to rule out any doubt whatsoever regarding its authenticity and legitimacy, and to ensure that it is scientifically irreproachable.



We believe that with an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual respect, it is possible to distance ourselves from the growing politicisation and radical polarisation that continues to affect our discussions and work. While this is true, it is also true that what brings us together is much stronger than the sum of our differences, as we are all striving to achieve the same goal: a world free of chemical weapons.

In line with what was just stated, Mr Chairperson, my delegation calls for those most interested in the processes of eliminating the Syrian chemical weapons programme to resolve the challenges that currently exist and return to the path of cooperation; we call for uniting efforts to put an end to any ambiguity that may remain regarding the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic. We truly hope that the rights of the Syrian Arab Republic will be restored within this Organisation once the requirements, which are still pending, are met.

I would also like to address the issue of the Organisation's biennial Draft Programme and Budget for the years 2022 – 2023: the OPCW's first biennial budget.

Guatemala has maintained its position to support budgets under the principle of zero nominal growth at all of the inter-governmental organisations in which it is a member for many years. This stance has been justified even under the serious consequences and budgetary demands that have been imposed upon our countries by the COVID-19 pandemic. It needs to be said that while Guatemala has decided to support this draft, absorbing any increase in its sovereign contribution to the OPCW constitutes a considerable effort for our Treasury and should be understood as an act of sacrifice that honours and recognises the work of our Organisation, as well as the conviction that we have in the objectives of the Convention and its implementation. However, we believe that through the proper management of the resources allocated to the Organisation, the leadership of the Technical Secretariat will know how to administer the funds with prudence, thus maximising their impact with savings and efficiencies, appropriate spending, and transparency.

In this same vein, Mr Chairperson, Guatemala joins its voice to the call made by many of our colleagues to find solutions that will facilitate effective administration and retention of the funds allocated for the activities within the international cooperation and assistance programme, and to avoid redirecting them *a posteriori* to other budgetary programmes. We strongly support the suggestions made by our colleagues from the African Group and we call for these to be implemented.

I would like to add that international cooperation and assistance activities are essential for reaching the objectives of the Convention, and for improving the Organisation. It is an investment in the establishment and enhancement of the capacities of the States Parties, which also leads to technological, economic, and human development for the States, improved capacities for meeting their own needs in terms of the areas covered by the Convention, and finally, it paves the way for the future staff of the Technical Secretariat, which clearly needs specialised and experienced talent from all regions.

Regarding the regions, I would reiterate the announcement that Guatemala made at the last session of the OPCW Executive Council about the decision to carry out measures that are unilateral, but open for consultation with all States Parties that wish to discuss them, with the aim of collaborating to correct the conspicuous lack of balanced geographic representation among the staff of the Technical Secretariat. These efforts are to begin with consultations with the States Parties that are willing to participate with us and, on the other hand, with the

Technical Secretariat, towards developing concrete means of support for the processes of recruiting, selecting, hiring, and retaining qualified talent, and thus correctly implementing the provisions of the Convention in this regard.

Guatemala is also committed to pursuing the universality of the Convention and, as a responsible State party and facilitator of achieving universality, we would like to thank the Director-General for his actions and efforts directed at the effective implementation of the Action Plan for the Universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention in spite of the challenges resulting from the measures in place to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. I would also like to urge the very few States that are not yet a part of the most successful disarmament regime to join us to finally reach universality.

In addition to serving as a facilitator for universality, Guatemala has also accepted the responsibility of chairing the Working Group on the Manner of Appointment of the External Auditor of the Organisation. As you will be able to see in the report presented at this Conference, the efforts of this Group are moving forward unimpeded thanks to the substantive contributions of each of its members, to whom I extend my sincere appreciation. I trust that with the collaboration we have received from the Technical Secretariat and the ABAF, we will be able to carry out our mandate in full and within a reasonable time frame.

Before we conclude this statement, Mr Chairperson, please allow me to express our sincere congratulations to the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, on the renewal of his mandate for an additional term. I strongly believe that the show of the confidence by the States Parties in his management is neither gratuitous nor casual, but clearly the strong and deserved recognition of his sensible, unfaltering leadership that he has carried out to date, and which I am confident will continue in the same manner over the next four years. We know that these have not been easy times for the Organisation, the Technical Secretariat, or the Director-General, which has only further highlighted the skilful leadership with which he has been able to overcome innumerable dangers while keeping us on the right path. Congratulations, Fernando.

We request, Mr Chairperson, that this statement be considered an official document of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties of the OPCW and published on the Organisation's website and Catalyst.

Thank you.

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