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PANAMA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ELIZABETH WARD NEIMAN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

On behalf of the delegation of Panama, I present my respects to the Chairperson, the Director-General, the members of the Bureau, and the delegations of the States Parties here today.

First and foremost, I wish to express my congratulations to H.E. Bård Ivar Svendsen on his election as Chairperson. I am convinced that your skills will shine in this capacity.

The delegation of Panama is fully at your disposal during your term; you have our support for the development of the agenda before us and the firm resolve of Panama to work towards a good rapport.

Likewise, we also highlight the work of H.E. José Antonio Zabalgaitia Trejo following the culmination of his chairmanship. It was an honour to have had a representative of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean serve as Chairperson.

Over the course of 2021, we encountered new challenges and continue to work together to minimise the effects that we have not yet fully overcome due to COVID-19.

I will avail myself of this opportunity to recognise the hard work being carried out by the Director-General, H.E. Fernando Arias, which we trust he will continue over his next term, and the work of the Technical Secretariat together with the States Parties towards ensuring a follow-up on agenda items whilst we adapt to a new virtual era due to the measures that had to be taken due to the pandemic, and that we have been able to minimise via collaborative efforts in implementing the mandate of the Convention.

Although we know that positive progress has been made in this area, it is of the utmost importance to redouble our efforts to uphold our commitment at a time when we are facing enormous challenges that have brought us to a place where we are dealing with the use of chemical weapons and an international agenda that is constantly changing.

Panama is aware of the need to adopt the Organisation's budget to ensure it functions smoothly, but it should be aligned with the economic reality in which we currently live, following the blow dealt by the COVID-19 crisis and the challenges that we are dealing with as we revitalise the economy.



We are also conscious of the need for continual improvement in infrastructure, which is why I am pleased to announce that Panama, after much effort, has decided to make a voluntary contribution to the modernisation project that will transform the OPCW Laboratory into a Centre for Chemistry and Technology.

This is a mere token of our commitment and the trust we put in the Organisation. We also support the international cooperation programmes and are always willing to offer support for what is needed for the exchange of knowledge via training courses through our National Authority.

With regard to the OPCW's human resources, we call for fair geographical representation and the visualisation of the key role of the increased participation of women and their empowerment in this agenda.

In this regard, I would like to recognise in particular the valuable contribution of the facilitators on governance issues, H.E. Laura Dupuy, Ambassador of Uruguay, and H.E. Matthew Neuhaus, Ambassador of Australia, in addressing matters related to the Organisation's human resources together with the Director-General, thus promoting initiatives aimed at improving numbers in gender parity as well as the urgency of improving geographic representation.

We strongly emphasise our stance against the use of chemicals by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances.

For this reason, we recognise the work that the States Parties are carrying out together, and we support the work that the delegation of the United States, together with other delegations, has carried out to develop the draft decision on the use of aerosolised central nervous system-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes.

We reiterate the Republic of Panama's commitment to and trust in the mandate of the Chemical Weapons Convention with the aim of building a world free of chemical weapons.

I kindly request that this statement be considered an official document.

Thank you.

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