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CUBA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MS ANET PINO RIVERO
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA
AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

The Cuban delegation congratulates H.E. Bård Ivar Svendsen, Ambassador of Norway, on his election as Chairperson of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, as well as the new Vice-Chairpersons and the other members of the Bureau. We wish you success in your work.

Cuba's position in favour of the prohibition and complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction is firm and long-standing. As a result, we defend strict compliance with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and reaffirm our commitment to the OPCW and to safeguarding the letter and spirit of the Convention.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by H.E. Fikrat Akhundov, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China.

The COVID-19 pandemic, the devastating effects of which have left no country untouched, has impacted and limited the development of our work for nearly two years. We have had to resort to exceptional approaches to working and decision making, applicable only within an extraordinary context such as this pandemic.

We recognise the flexibility and cooperation demonstrated by the States Parties in holding consultations and sessions of the Executive Council, which are clear demonstrations of their commitment to the OPCW and the importance that they assign to fulfilling their mandates. That notwithstanding, we believe that all possible technical and procedural alternatives should be explored in line with the regulations of the Organisation to ensure that the States Parties are able to work and contribute on equal footing, without undermining our sovereign rights as States Parties to the Convention.

We once again reiterate that the adjustments made to the OPCW's working procedures and modalities should be considered only as decisions of an exceptional nature and should not serve as a precedent for the future, or interpreted as tacit modifications to the regulations of the Organisation.



We insist on the importance—even in these circumstances—of putting into place all the conditions for the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all the provisions of the Convention. Strengthening all the facilitations, which assess matters of special importance for the future of the Organisation, is an important tool that should continue to be enhanced.

The gradual improvement of working methods and the observance of existing procedures by the regulatory bodies, in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Convention, are also goals that we should strive to meet. This will allow us to boost inclusion and transparency, while avoiding the politicisation of the Organisation's discussions in a way that will help to restore the practice of consensus-based decision making.

With regard to the progress made in the destruction of the chemical weapons programme since the last Conference, we reiterate the need for the United States—the only possessor State—to comply with its destruction plans in an expedited and safe manner, in line with what is stipulated in the Convention, its Verification Annex, and the relevant decisions adopted by the States Parties. There is not much time left before 2023. We hope that this country will fulfil its commitment and that it will be able to announce the definitive destruction of its entire arsenal at the Fifth Review Conference.

We recognise the cooperation maintained by the Syrian Arab Republic with the Technical Secretariat concerning the destruction of its chemical weapons and production facilities. We welcome the important efforts made towards resolving outstanding issues over recent months and the progress achieved. We reiterate that any interaction with this State Party, just like any other, should be conducted without any external interference and with full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as with the agreement of its legitimate authorities.

We must avoid the growing trends to contaminate and extend the mandate of the Convention with the implementation of initiatives that go far beyond it and that do not have a consensus among the States Parties and that, at the very least, require extensive discussion.

With regard to the Organisation's Programme and Budget for the years 2022 – 2023, we reiterate the need to adopt separate decisions for each of the budget items in accordance with the OPCW Financial Regulations. This has been the practice for over 20 years, not the adoption of a single omnibus decision, which includes issues of distinct nature and scope, both procedural as well as substantive matters. We reaffirm the need to observe the regulations and existing practices for essential issues such as this, while underscoring that a consensus cannot be used to impose decisions that do not have the support of all States Parties. We note with great concern the continued decrease in the financial resources assigned to international cooperation.

The establishment of a number of funds and special accounts is an issue that should be analysed in future and should be overseen by the regulatory bodies through the development of guidelines for their establishment and administration, which will provide greater transparency and responsibility for all States Parties.

Progress towards the universality of the Convention achieved by the majority of developing countries confirms the need to move forward with the establishment of an integral approach in the field of international cooperation and assistance for the present and future of the OPCW, given the tangible benefits for all States Parties.

We recognise the efforts made over this past year by the Technical Secretariat, particularly by the International Cooperation and Assistance Division, in maintaining the vitality of some training programmes via the use of information and communication technologies, in addition to ensuring the success—within the current limitations—of the annual workshop on the implementation of decision C-16/DEC.10 this past 10 November. Nevertheless, we call for the enhancement of programmes and adequate resources for the full implementation of Article XI of the Convention on the economic and technological development of the States Parties, which is a necessity and is one of the priorities of the Organisation.

Within this context, we recognise the work of the Article XI facilitation group, as well as its drafting group, which we are proud to be a part of. We believe that the document produced following the consultations that were held is a solid foundation upon which to continue working towards the adoption of an action plan that will guarantee the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI.

The imposition of the illegal economic, commercial, and financial embargo by the Government of the United States against Cuba, the extraterritorial scope of which is broad and has been intensified to unprecedented levels in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, is in contradiction to and violates the provisions of Article XI of the Convention. The national document of the Republic of Cuba on difficulties and obstacles encountered by Cuba affecting the full implementation of Article XI of the Convention, which was circulated as an official-series document to this Conference with the symbol C-26/NAT.1, lays out the various economic and humanitarian consequences of this irrational, flawed, and genocidal policy in the field of chemistry for purposes not prohibited by the Convention. To cite but one example, the Cuban chemical industry suffered the loss of over USD 5 million due to disruptions in production caused by the lack of fuels.

In spite of the difficult situation caused by the embargo of the United States, exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19, and the political and communications campaign against Cuba, organised and financed by the United States with the goal of subverting the constitutional order, generating social unrest, and provoking a change in the system, Cuba reaffirms its willingness to cooperate with the OPCW and work with the Organisation through its submission of a payment plan that will help it settle its debts and reinstate its voting rights.

I would like to conclude by reiterating our country's resolve to continue supporting and contributing its experiences in carrying out activities and fulfilling its general obligations within the framework of activities not prohibited by the Convention, national implementation measures, assistance and protection against chemical weapons, and international cooperation and assistance in general.

I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and published on its website and Catalyst.

Thank you.

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