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BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR GLADYS MARÍA GUTIÉRREZ ALVARADO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF
VENEZUELA TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

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

The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) extends its greetings, congratulates, and welcomes H.E. Bård Ivar Svendsen, Ambassador of Norway, as Chairperson of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. We express our confidence that your leadership will lead this Conference to a satisfactory conclusion. Likewise, we extend our congratulations to the new Vice-Chairpersons and the other members of the Bureau, and we wish them every success in conducting the work of this session. We also reiterate our commitment to work in a dedicated manner towards the common goals of the Organisation.

We also welcome and recognise the work of H.E. José Antonio Zabalgaitia Trejo, Ambassador of Mexico and Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, and we welcome his reports; the same is extended to the Director-General, H.E. Fernando Arias, and his extensive report. Our delegation expresses its appreciation to the staff of the OPCW for their dedication to the implementation of the noble objectives of the Organisation.

Within the framework of the COVID-19 pandemic, we would also encourage the continued search for more inclusive mechanisms and technological platforms that will make it possible for all States to participate under equal conditions, without any restrictions to exercising their rights, while observing public health and social distancing regulations in place due to the pandemic.

As such, we underscore the importance of strict compliance with the regulations of the OPCW, and we note the exceptional nature of the modalities that have been adopted for the Twenty-Sixth Session due to the challenges posed by the current pandemic. In this regard, we voice the importance of the active participation of all States Parties in the work of the OPCW, without discrimination or technical obstacles, as these modalities should be seen as exceptional, rather than as setting a precedent for the future; they should not become the norm once the current exceptional circumstances are no longer in place.



Venezuela reiterates its commitment to the OPCW and once again reaffirms 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 global disarmament and the non-proliferation of chemical weapons. This commitment is also demonstrated through the fulfilment of our obligations as a State Party.

Venezuela aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and China. We underscore that the destruction of chemical weapons is the top and fundamental priority of the Organisation, which is why we urge the United States of America, the only possessor State, to accelerate every measure necessary to ultimately finalise the expedited destruction of its declared arsenal in order to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Convention and the relevant decisions adopted by the Organisation's policy-making organs.

In this same way, Venezuela expresses its strongest and most unequivocal condemnation of the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemical products as a weapon anywhere, by anyone, and under any circumstances.

In line with what was expressed in the aforementioned statement by the NAM and China, Venezuela maintains a principled position on the existence and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which it sees as a continued, serious threat to international peace and security.

With regard to the elimination and destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons production facilities, we welcome the reports by the Director-General on the finalisation of the destruction of all the weapons and production facilities declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. We hope that the existing satisfactory cooperation between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic will continue with all issues. At the same time, we reiterate and urge that it continue successfully, without any type of external interference, and with complete respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Venezuela expresses its profound concern over any intent to accuse States Parties of using chemical weapons based on unfounded allegations made in media reports or any other open-source information, including non-governmental entities. This trend could become a dangerous precedent in the future work of the OPCW, which is an international organisation capable of verifying the compliance of States Parties with the provisions of the Convention, the authority and credibility of which must be maintained and respected at all times.

The surge in this type of practice is absolutely unacceptable and should bring those engaged in such to reflect on their actions. Within this context, our efforts must focus on improving the efficacy of the activities of the OPCW in terms of addressing cases of alleged use of chemical weapons; it is imperative that every step is carried out strictly within the framework of this Convention. This concerns maintaining and strengthening the most important multilateral instrument in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament.

With regard to the chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China, we note the recent progress in the destruction of these chemical weapons, in spite of the impact of COVID-19, and we urge all delegations to keep abreast of this matter, which is an important objective for this Organisation, the completion of which would not be possible without the cooperation of both countries.

We also insist on addressing all the technical and legal aspects in a structured discussion on the use of aerosolised central nervous system-acting chemicals (CNS-acting chemicals) in order to advance towards the objective of adopting standards aligned with the Chemical Weapons Convention. We emphasise the need to redouble efforts via dialogue and consensus in order to get to the bottom of this issue in an integral and constructive manner with the aim of achieving a true consensus among the States Parties—and not an illusory consensus imposed by a small group of countries.

The implementation of some of the pillars of the Convention continues to be an outstanding issue at this Organisation. Venezuela reiterates the need to make progress and achieve concrete goals in the implementation of the provisions of Article XI relating to the economic and technological development of the States Parties; this is one of the pillars of the Convention for which implementation continues to be delayed in spite of its importance for all States Parties.

In this regard, we call for the removal of any type of discriminatory restriction relating to the economic and technological development of the States, and we reiterate our rejection of any coercive unilateral measures against other States Parties, which are contrary to the letter and spirit of the Convention, and which affect its long-term viability, as it has an adverse impact on the development of countries that, like ours, are seriously affected by such arbitrary and unilateral sanctions.

Venezuela has for some years now been facing a series of different kinds of aggressions, attempted coups, the sabotage of its public services, a siege upon its economy, an attack against its currency, and the embargo of its financial institutions. For a long time even before these coercive, unilateral measures, which have ultimately become sanctions against our country, were made public, these had been put into motion, making commercial trade and economic development impossible, impeding the acquisition of foodstuffs, medicines, medical equipment, and general goods and services that are fundamental for the population and the sustainment of our most important national industry—the petrol industry, which is a fundamental pillar of our economy; this combined with the policy of confiscating our assets and freezing our country's accounts, amounting to nearly USD 30 billion.

Thus, 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 in supporting the arrangements needed to establish, on behalf of the Organisation and the Host Country, a mechanism or channel that will allow our country to have in place a secure way to honour said financial commitments.

Regrettably, until now these efforts have been unproductive due to the coercive unilateral measures that make it impossible to have the normal interaction that would allow us to fulfil these commitments. For all of these reasons, we reiterate our request for assistance, both to the relevant departments of the Technical Secretariat, as well as the Host Country's national entities that would help us move forward and carry out the transfer of financial resources from our country to the Organisation.

Our delegation, in line with the tenets and principles that we have continually upheld throughout all our statements, has insisted against politicising our discussions in order to preserve the eminently technical essence of the OPCW. For this reason, we advocate for searching for a consensus and dialogue among all States Parties, to make it possible to create the conditions necessary to take consensus-based decisions as the main approach to working, without giving into the temptation of forcing through a vote, which will only lead to greater polarisation within our Organisation.

Finally, our delegation expresses its wish that the States Parties work with a spirit of good will and cooperation to ensure that this session comes to a successful conclusion. We reiterate that the practice of taking consensus-based decisions is the correct approach to achieving the object and purpose of this Conference.

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

Thank you for your kind attention.

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