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CUBA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ANET PINO RIVERO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

We welcome H.E. Dr Eniola Olaitan Ajayi, Ambassador of Nigeria, as Chairperson of the Executive Council. We wish to thank the Director-General, H.E. Fernando Arias, and the Vice-Chairpersons of the Executive Council for their reports.

The Cuban delegation endorses the statement delivered by H.E. Fikrat Akhundov, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

Cuba reiterates its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, and under any circumstances. This firm position is part of our conviction to advancing towards the goal of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, including the prohibition and elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. The existence and proliferation of these weapons continues to pose a very serious threat to international peace and security.

Already two years have passed since the world began dealing with the complex situation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Its effects have impacted all our countries and have exacerbated the effects of the multifactorial crisis affecting us. Within this context, we must reiterate the importance that the OPCW and all its States Parties continue to guarantee the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all the provisions of the Convention, which includes the economic and technological development of the States Parties.

We reaffirm the importance of strict compliance with the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Council and underscore the exceptional nature of the modalities that were adopted for the most recent sessions due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, we express the need for the active participation of all States Parties in the work of the OPCW, without discrimination or technical obstacles, and we emphasise that the modalities that have been used should be seen as exceptions. We must appreciate the current epidemiological situation, as well as the measures adopted by the Host Country, in determining the possibility of having the Organisation return to normal working conditions while maintaining the required public health measures.



The Cuban delegation wishes to highlight the establishment of the coordination mechanism to revitalise existing facilitations, and we urge the Chairperson of the Executive Council to redouble efforts to explore ways and means to carry out said revitalisation, in accordance with the document that sets out the position of the Non-Aligned Movement and China, dated 4 October 2019.

The Organisation must take care of the prestige that distinguishes it, while fully meeting the objective for which it was established. In this regard, we reiterate—as with other issues—the need for any accusation against States Parties alleging that the use of chemical weapons must be well substantiated based on the reports and investigations of the Organisation, in line with the provisions of the Convention and its working and verification procedures. We reject the unfounded accusations made based on media reports or any other open source that could attempt to manipulate reality and form certain erroneous opinions. The OPCW is capable of and responsible for verifying compliance with the provisions of the Convention with authority and credibility at all times.

The Cuban delegation reiterates its call to the only State Party in possession of chemical weapons—the United States—to accelerate all measures necessary to guarantee its compliance with the provisions of the Convention, its Verification Annex, and the full implementation of the relevant decisions that have been adopted. We note that the announced time frame, which has already been extended, is approaching in 2023. The Review Conference will be an excellent opportunity to show that this chemical disarmament objective has been achieved.

With regard to the elimination and destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and the destruction of its facilities that produced these weapons, Cuba notes the reports by the Director-General on the finalisation of the destruction of all the chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. We hope that the cooperation between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic will continue on all issues, without any external interference and with full respect for its sovereignty. When facing differences, the parties must come to a solution through dialogue.

The Cuban delegation reaffirms that Article XI is one of the central objectives of the Convention. The full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all the provisions of this Article is imperative, and must be carried out in a way that does not create any obstacles to the economic and technological development of the States Parties and that promotes international cooperation in chemical activities not prohibited by the Convention; this is one of its basic pillars.

We underscore the importance of promoting international cooperation for the benefit of the States Parties via the transfer of technology, material, and equipment in the field of chemistry for peaceful purposes, as well as the elimination of any discriminatory restriction, such as coercive unilateral measures imposed against other States Parties, as these are contrary to the letter and spirit of the Convention.

We once again denounce the lack of progress when it comes to the national implementation of Article XI by the United States due to its imposition of an economic, financial, and commercial embargo—which is markedly extraterritorial in nature—against Cuba for 60 years. The genocidal nature of this policy has been exacerbated amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposition of 243 additional measures. It has been the primary obstacle in obtaining medications, reagents, diagnostic kits, protective gear, disinfectants, and other substances,

equipment, and medical supplies that the country needs to effectively tackle this dangerous illness, which affects us all. We demand the end of this policy and the adoption of the legislative measures needed for the United States in compliance with Article XI.

The Cuban delegation wishes to highlight the importance of holding the review and evaluation workshop of the components of an agreed framework for the full implementation of Article XI; it is a useful platform for developing concrete measures and recommendations for ensuring the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of this Article. In this regard, we welcome the document produced by the drafting committee, which has consolidated the ideas presented at the annual workshops and serves as an important foundation for continuing discussions and working on a plan of action that will set out complete actions in order to guarantee the adequate implementation of Article XI. Likewise, we request that the Technical Secretariat provide a complete report on the flaws and challenges in the effective implementation of decision C-16/DEC.10 (dated 1 December 2011), which remains fully valid, and in order to ensure that it also takes into consideration the proposals of the Non-Aligned Movement and China (C-12/NAT.1, dated 6 November 2007) on the implementation of Article XI of the Convention, including a plan of action.

It is imperative that the Programme and Budget of the OPCW allocates sufficient financial, technical, and human resources to carry out international cooperation activities, which include not only training, but also the transfer of technology and provision of the equipment and materials necessary for the development of chemical applications in States Parties. The Cuban delegation supports the proposal of the Non-Aligned Movement and China to establish a special fund within the regular budget for international cooperation and assistance activities towards preserving the funds allocated for these activities throughout the financial year.

We align ourselves with the statements of the delegations before ours welcoming the progress made in the construction of the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology, while reiterating the important responsibility of the States Parties to consider and adopt its modalities and mandate. One of the main functions of this institution should be contributing to international cooperation activities.

The Cuban delegation notes the facilitations under way on the OPCW's organisational governance. We reiterate that recruitment of the staff of the Technical Secretariat must be fair, transparent, and should guarantee balanced geographical distribution, in line with what is stipulated by paragraph 44 of Article VIII of the Convention.

We reiterate that the practice of taking consensus-based decisions is the correct approach to achieving the object and purpose of the Convention.

The Cuban delegation requests that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Ninety-Ninth Session of the OPCW Executive Council and published on Catalyst and the Organisation's website.

Thank you.

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