

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ALIREZA KAZEMI ABADI PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN TO THE OPCW AT THE 102nd SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mr Chairperson,

At the outset, allow me to express how glad I am to see you chairing another session of the Executive Council and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in discharging your duties. I would also like to thank Director-General Fernando Arias for his report delivered at this session.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Rahman Mustafayev, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the OPCW, on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China.

Mr Chairperson,

As the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (Fifth Review Conference) approaches, while appreciating the progress made in the implementation of the Convention over the past 26 years, we should not lose sight of the fact that achieving the Convention's object and purpose remains a long way off. Despite the fact that the achievements of the Organisation in different areas, particularly in verification system have earned the recognition of the international community over these years, other pillars have not been implemented to the extent expected, namely Articles X and XI on assistance and protection and international cooperation, including the international exchange of scientific and technical information, chemicals, and equipment. The Fifth Review Conference is a decent opportunity to review the operation of all provisions of the Convention, in order to ensure the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all fundamental principles and pillars of the Convention.

The destruction of chemical weapons is one of the main pillars of the Convention, and an essential component in its contribution to international peace and security. The Convention is the first disarmament treaty that includes a timeframe for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. Against this backdrop, the full destruction of chemical weapons has not yet been achieved. Therefore, the sole possessor State Party should comply with its obligations under the Convention, and accelerate its efforts by making use of all relevant technologies and methods to complete the destruction of its chemical weapons stockpiles in the shortest possible time.

The Convention also assures States Parties that their economic and technological development for peaceful purposes will not be hampered by implementing the obligations under the Convention. This assurance is of the utmost importance, since international cooperation in chemical trade and technology for peaceful purposes is a compelling incentive for accession. It further encourages States Parties, especially developing countries, to participate more actively in the work of the Organisation and the implementation of the Convention. Failure to fulfil this assurance through removing impediments to the economic and technological development of States Parties would irreparably impair the integrity of the Convention. The Organization should put promotion of trade and international cooperation in the peaceful application of chemistry on top of its agenda, immediately after the elimination of all declared chemical weapons.

Article XI, as it stands, establishes a general principle on how the States Parties should frame their national policies in the field of chemical cooperation and activities, and how the Organisation should implement verification procedures. Despite this clarity, there are still some national tendencies, as well as certain export control regimes, that violate and undermine the letter and spirit of Article XI. In this context, the Islamic Republic of Iran firmly believes that the OPCW Director-General should use all means, capacities, and powers for the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of the provisions of Article XI, which is an essential element in the realisation of the object and purpose of the Convention.

Mr Chairperson,

Due to its humanitarian nature, the International Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons is of high significance, and the States Parties and the Secretariat should practically and substantially take the necessary actions to ensure that this humanitarian obligation is rightly met. At present, the necessary support extended to this network does not correspond to its long-term goals. Therefore, it is quite necessary to consider the possibility of direct allocation of resources within the OPCW's regular budget.

Challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic remind us of the importance of strengthening the existing humanitarian arrangements of the OPCW, such as the International Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons, as well as the necessity to explore new ways and means to update and safeguard the humanitarian work of the Convention with a special focus on the treatment of the victims of chemical weapons.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, as the main victim of chemical weapons in the contemporary era, reaffirms its resolute commitment to and continued support for the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention, and strongly rejects the imposition of discriminatory restrictions, particularly unilateral sanctions

against the Member States of this Organisation, as doing so directly affects the health and medications of the victims. It is noteworthy that more than tens of thousands of victims of chemical weapons in Iran are now under unlawful and inhumane unilateral sanctions, while they are in urgent need of specific medications and treatments. We now require tangible measures to be taken by the Organisation to alleviate the suffering of the victims of chemical weapons

In this regard, my delegation wishes to inform you that the Islamic Republic of Iran will host the 11th "*International Course on Medical Aspects of Assistance and Protection against Chemical Weapons*" in Tehran, in 2023. This event aims at providing medical professionals from States Parties with the opportunity to learn more about medical treatment for victims of chemical weapons incidents.

The Islamic Republic of Iran attaches paramount importance to the universality of the Convention, so that no one remains outside the Convention and no chemical activity remains outside its verification regime, which in light of the emerging threats posed by terrorist groups, would contribute to maintaining international peace and security, and would prepare the foundation for achieving a world free of the threat of any category of weapons of mass destruction.

In this regard, we welcome the efforts and initiatives of the Technical Secretariat to keep contact with non-parties in line with the Action Plan for Universality of the Convention (EC-M-23/DEC.3, dated 24 October 2003) and relevant decisions adopted by the policy-making organs to encourage them to accede to the Convention at the earliest possible time and without any preconditions.

Mr Chairperson,

On the issues related to the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran consistently supports the continuation of the cooperation between Syria and the OPCW within a mutually agreed framework of collaboration. In this connection, we welcome the continuation of the high-level meetings between the Syrian authorities and the OPCW. My delegation reiterates its concern over the exertion of any external pressure on the genuine cooperation between Syria and the Technical Secretariat. It also firmly believes that cooperation and dialogue have proven to be the best mechanism to resolve remaining technical issues. The technical issues need to be resolved through cooperation and dialogue, and by avoiding political pressure, which has proven time and again to be a failed strategy that would jeopardise the whole process.

With regard to the resumption of the activities of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to undertake limited activities instead of a round of consultation in January, it is expected that the Technical Secretariat considers, in an impartial and professional manner, the relevant provisions of the Convention regarding the designation and

selection of the OPCW inspectors, as well as observing the sovereign rights of the Syrian Arab Republic in carrying out its mandate.

Mr Chairperson,

The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes the establishment of the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology and looks forward to its inauguration on 12 May 2023. We are of the view that the Centre will be an asset to the Technical Secretariat in fulfilling its well-defined mandate in accordance with the Convention, as well as enhancing international cooperation and assistance among States Parties, in order to ensure the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention. To this end, we firmly believe that the modalities, mandate, operational needs, and budgetary allocation for the Centre should be submitted for approval of States Parties through the PMOs, and the advantage of the Centre, including its services and capacity building programs in the field of research, analysis and training should only be provided to States Parties. Extending of such benefits to non-parties will adversely deprive the Organisation of incentives to encourage them to adhere to the convention.

My delegation notes with appreciation that the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference is continuing its work under the leadership of H.E. Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia. We hope that the Fifth Review Conference will achieve substantive results within an inclusive and transparent framework. While our delegation has already started its careful reviewing of the first revised draft of the chairperson's provisional text and is looking forward to the next round of consultation, it firmly believes that all efforts should be made to avoid further politicisation and polarization within the Organization and to facilitate mutual understanding and cooperation.

As a professional and technical organisation, the OPCW should maintain impartiality and professionalism, perform its functions in accordance with the Convention's provisions, and be vigilant against abuse of rights and powers. To this end, the Working Group could play a key role in this regard.

In conclusion, my delegation strongly believes that preserving the well-established tradition of consensus, avoiding politicisation, and the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all provisions of the Convention, promoting universality, enhancing international cooperation on peaceful uses of chemistry, and reinforcing national and international capabilities on assistance and protection are the best ways to strengthen the global norm against chemical weapons use.

I request that this statement be posted as an official document of this session on the OPCW catalyst and public website.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.