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**COSTA RICA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ARNOLDO BRENES CASTRO  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF COSTA RICA TO THE  
OPCW AT THE FIFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE  
STATES PARTIES TO REVIEW THE OPERATION OF THE CHEMICAL  
WEAPONS CONVENTION**

Mr Chairperson,  
Mr Director-General,  
Distinguished delegates:

Costa Rica welcomes H.E. Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the OPCW, upon his designation as Chairperson of this Fifth Review Conference. I reiterate the support of my delegation as he carries out the very important work of managing the work of this special session.

We express our recognition of Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia, the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group, and of the Vice-Chairpersons for their dedication to managing the preparation process that, over the course of months and in an orderly, transparent, and dynamic manner, led to the development of the final document. Their commitment to the roadmap that was followed from the beginning has been fundamental in ensuring that, on this occasion, there is a clear route for the future of the Organisation.

Costa Rica would also like to recognise the work of the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, and express its confidence in the professionalism and impartiality of the team of the Technical Secretariat. During this review of the past five years, we will be able to demonstrate our satisfaction with the progress that has been made, the managerial improvements implemented at the national level, and the cooperation provided in an effort to build capacities within the various pillars of the Convention at the national level.

Within this context, Costa Rica is pleased to have been able to host, with the support of the Technical Secretariat, regional training activities for GRULAC States Parties, such as a regional workshop on the management of chemical security and the safe handling of chemicals in July 2019, a basic course on responding to emergencies involving chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial chemicals for first responders in June 2021, and an online course on the same subject in December 2021. Costa Rica has also contributed its national instructors, who are certified by the OPCW and who have participated in courses offered in other countries, in addition to organising national courses such as, for example, one for customs officials on the control of chemicals in compliance with the Convention, as well as roundtable discussions on the Convention for professionals in the field of chemistry.



Costa Rica has also made reforms to its national legislation in order to continue complying with required updates, for example the modification made in 2022 in the Executive Order on the list of controlled substances under the Convention in order to include the new Schedule 1 chemicals. Likewise, starting in January 2023, work is under way with the Customs Authority to ensure that the National Authority has better control of the transfers of chemicals subject to control under the Convention. I am also pleased to note that, per the request of the Technical Secretariat, this year in 2023 Costa Rica will be a pioneer in a pilot test to develop a new national framework for the implementation of the Convention in the period of 2023 – 2026. We hope that this national framework will eventually be of use to other States Parties.

We therefore wish to underscore Costa Rica's full commitment to chemical disarmament and the object and purpose of the Convention; we reaffirm our determination to completely rule out the possibility of the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, and under any circumstances, as well as to continue cooperating with the Technical Secretariat and the other States Parties.

I believe it is timely to recall that the Chemical Weapons Convention, in its preamble, has incorporated the commitment to carrying out the object and purpose of the Charter of the United Nations. For this reason, we emphasise at this forum our condemnation of the continued war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Costa Rica joins the clear message of the international community to achieve general, fair, and lasting peace, which will contribute to international peace and security.

Our delegation sees in this Conference a valuable opportunity to review the Organisation's actions and, even more importantly, to discuss the areas of work that are relevant to achieving the objectives set out in the Convention. These areas include identifying new threats as well as the non-compliance of one Member State with the Convention.

In effect, in the five years preceding this Conference, the international community has witnessed the non-compliance of the Syrian Arab Republic with the Convention.

We reiterate that it is critical that the Syrian Arab Republic comply with the obligations set out in the Convention, as well as the decisions of the Executive Council, the Conference of the States Parties, and the Security Council. Likewise, we join the calls made for the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with the Organisation without delay.

With regard to this dossier, Costa Rica recognises the professional, dedicated, and impartial work carried out by the Declaration Assessment Team, the Fact-Finding Mission, and the Investigation and Identification Team of the Technical Secretariat.

We express our profound concern regarding the findings in the three reports of the Investigation and Identification Team issued between 2020 and 2023, which have to do with the dossier of the Syrian Arab Republic and together meticulously document five instances of the use of chemical weapons by this Government. The third and most recent report concerning Douma (S/2125/2023, dated 27 January 2023) clearly documents the link between the Syrian Arab Air Force and the launch of chemical weapons upon two residential buildings in the central zone of the city, causing the death of at least 43 identified individuals and affecting several dozens more.

Costa Rica condemns in the strongest possible terms the aforementioned attacks, which constitute a violation of the Convention, and we underscore the determination of our country

to ensure that these crimes do not go unpunished. Likewise, we express our solidarity with the victims of these atrocious crimes.

We also condemn the multiple occasions on which this Organisation has borne witness to communications acknowledging the threat of the use of chemical weapons within the context of the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

Costa Rica supports the final document from the consultations that have been taking place in recent months and which was circulated in April by the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group. We believe that this is a balanced document, both in terms of its analysis of the implementation of the Convention over the past five years, as well as in terms of the proposals therein for the future work over the course of the next five years. For this reason, we hope that this Review Conference can adopt it by consensus.

We welcome the various recommendations contained in said text, which very clearly focuses on highly relevant matters such as supporting the verification regime in playing a central role in disarmament, prioritising the destruction of chemical weapons, and preventing their re-emergence. Today, we are witnessing the verification of the destruction of 99% of declared chemical weapons, and we find ourselves at the threshold of achieving the goal of total destruction in September 2023 as a point of culmination of the first 25 years of the Convention.

Having a solid verification regime in place is fundamental for ensuring compliance with the Convention, which is why we support the recommendation to carry out an in-depth review of the current industrial verification regime, with a view to making it more efficient and guaranteeing that the technologies that are used are kept up-to-date, while also taking into account new challenges and new advances in science and technology.

The Organisation has prepared a vision for entering a new phase. In this regard, Costa Rica expresses its congratulations on the inauguration of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology on 12 May 2023; the Centre will have an important impact on the future of the Organisation in light of advances in science and technology, and consequently in supporting more effective cooperation with the States Parties.

We are pleased to see at this Conference that a foundation is being laid to ensure that the Organisation remains up-to-date when it comes to developments and advances in science and technology. In this regard, we support the recommendation that the Scientific Advisory Board should play a key role in the future of the Organisation.

We welcome the commitment to strengthen the work of the Advisory Board for Education and Outreach (ABEO). Costa Rica assigns high priority to fostering scientific literacy—a necessary action to counteract societal susceptibility to disinformation and the proliferation of false information.

International cooperation is fundamental for building a world that is more secure and peaceful. We support the recommendation in the final document to have the Technical Secretariat update and permanently adapt training programmes to meet specific needs, thus making it possible to support national implementation measures, in addition to strengthening assistance and protection for the benefit of economic and technological development, as well as the capacities of States for the peaceful use of chemistry, as part of the benefits derived from the Convention.

The recommendation that aims to develop training programmes adapted to the needs of the States Parties is equally important, considering the level of progress with national implementation measures. Thus, we welcome the incorporation of tools to assess the effectiveness of cooperation programmes and the incorporation of continuous improvements adapted to changing realities.

We are in favour of strengthening and promoting cooperation programmes aimed at boosting the participation of women in chemistry, encouraging STEM education for girls and women, and promoting actions to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda as elements that are central to this Organisation dedicated to disarmament.

We support the proposal to address the problem of sea-dumped chemical weapons and establishing the OPCW as a forum for voluntary cooperation.

Likewise, we are pleased to welcome the recommendation aimed at beginning the revision of the guidelines for assistance and participation of non-governmental organisations that wish to participate in sessions of the Conference of the States Parties, with a view to fostering greater participation on the part of civil society, thus promoting the transparency and openness of the Organisation's work.

We also join the call to intensify efforts to achieve the total universality of the Convention. This objective is indispensable to ensure the achievement of the object and purpose of the Convention: a world completely free of chemical weapons.

Finally, I would like to emphasise that during the preparatory process for this Conference, a light has been clearly shone on the need to ensure that the personnel of the Technical Secretariat comes from a broad geographic base. This is one strategic aspect for the future of the Organisation, as diversity constitutes a strength for any multilateral organisation, and we must recognise the current geographical imbalance in today's makeup of the Technical Secretariat. For this reason, we strongly support the establishment of the proposed Working Group, as well as the mandate thereof to draw up a plan of action that would work towards this objective in full accordance with the provisions of the Convention and in close cooperation with the Technical Secretariat. It is essential to recruit personnel from all regions and ensure balanced representation across the Organisation; towards this end, programmes in international cooperation aimed at enhancing strengths in human resources in less represented regions could be of great benefit. Cost Rica is also in favour of achieving gender parity across the all levels of the Technical Secretariat, but more than that, it is in favour of a resolutely inclusive approach that features the cross-sectional incorporation of gender perspective in all the Organisation's activities.

I thank you for your attention, and request that this statement be published as an official-series document of the Conference and posted on Catalyst.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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