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VENEZUELA

**STATEMENT BY MR RUBÉN DARÍO MOLINA
VICE MINISTER FOR MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS OF THE BOLIVARIAN
REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA 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,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the delegation, I express warm greetings from the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro Moros, and we welcome the Chairperson of this Fifth Review Conference, H.E. Henk Cor van der Kwast, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the OPCW. We wish him every success in leading our deliberations and assure him of our willingness to collaborate with his guidance in a dedicated manner and in favour of the common objectives of the Organisation.

Likewise, we extend our welcome to the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, as well as his opening statement to this Conference, his continuous efforts, and the continual hard work of the Technical Secretariat in promoting and striving to fulfil the mandates of the Organisation within the regime of international disarmament and the provisions of the Convention on the Development, Production, Stockpiling, and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela aligns itself with the statement delivered by H.E. Rahman Mustafayev, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the OPCW, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and China. Further, we express our recognition of the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference, H.E. Lauri Kuusing, Ambassador of the Republic of Estonia.

My delegation notes that this Fifth Review Conference represents an opportunity to examine the operation and implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, for the benefit of strengthening the work of the OPCW, which requires the strong commitments of the States Parties to respect the integrity of the Convention and not to politicise it, in line with the principles set out in the United Nations Charter, which we defend and request be permanently respected. In the name of active peace, we must guarantee a world free of chemical weapons, maintain the peaceful uses of chemistry for the good of humankind and the development of nations, without exception or double standards, and make advancements in chemical development in line with close international cooperation and assistance among the Member



States, which should never be used to steer a change of the central focus of the Convention that we have given ourselves, without seeking to extend the mandate of the Convention by way of accommodating interpretations and advantageous practices.

Venezuela underscores that achieving universality of the Convention is of great importance. We respectfully urge those States that are not yet Parties to the Convention to ratify it without delay or preconditions. It is sad that since the Fourth Review Conference to date, we do not have new Member States. Perhaps this has something to do with the attempted politicisation of the Organisation.

We reaffirm our commitment to global and absolute chemical disarmament, in compliance with international treaties on the matter. In this regard, modern times demand that we overcome the politicisation of this Organisation. Politicisation and double standards considerably limit the objectivity and credibility of the Convention and collaborative work. It is then necessary to return to strengthening the OPCW, reinstate constructive dialogue, and reinvigorate the culture of consensus, cooperation, and inclusive multilateralism.

The existence and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continue to pose a threat to peace, humanity, and the existence of living beings. For this reason, Venezuela reiterates its principled position, underscoring that the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemical products as a weapon anywhere, by any person or entity, and under any circumstances, is reprehensible and completely contrary to the provisions of the Convention and the international regulatory structure that we have given ourselves. At the same time, our country expresses its deep concern regarding the attempt to accuse States Parties to the Convention of using chemical weapons based on allegations that are unfounded, manipulated, formulated based on fabricated reports filtered through the media and other open sources of information, including non-governmental organisations, parastatal entities, and investigation and identification groups with dubious technical and scientific criteria. Without a doubt, these actions constitute a highly dangerous precedent for the present and future work of the OPCW.

We trust that this Fifth Review Conference will continue to take into account compliance with the deadline for the complete destruction of the full chemical stockpile possessed by the United States of America. This country's compliance will make it possible to amplify work on matters that are crucial for the implementation of the Convention and which deserve greater efforts towards fulfilling the provisions set out in Articles X and XI, especially those related to the economic and technological development of the States Parties and international cooperation and assistance, which require increased technical assistance, the unconditional transfer of technologies, the allotment of greater financial resources, and the acquisition of materials for equipment—all of which go hand-in-hand with strengthening national capacities.

The Venezuela delegation would underscore that international cooperation, true inclusive multilateralism, and unconditional technical assistance fail when faced with the imposition of criminal, coercive unilateral measures. In this regard, we reiterate before this Conference our condemnation of the impact of the 927 coercive unilateral measures violating human rights, including the right to development. These unilateral measures imposed by the United States and its allies in the European Union are conceived and executed against the Venezuelan people by States Parties to the Convention. It is worth reiterating that these measures truncate and hinder Venezuela's integral work with the OPCW. The blockade of our financial transactions impedes, among other things, our fulfilment of our financial commitments, such as assessed contributions.

It is pertinent to summarise that the aforementioned measures have a direct impact on the programmes of chemical protection and security in the national industry (a fundamental requirement of the Convention), thus reducing the effectiveness of our programmes and increasing the possibility of suffering a major chemical calamity, all stemming from the impact of these criminal measures and how they have limited the opportunities for the public and private sectors of the chemical and petrochemical industries to adequately mitigate any liability. These coercive unilateral measures prevent us from acquiring necessary equipment and technology.

We are confident that this Conference will allow us to move forward on issues related to governance in accordance with the Convention and its provisions, which we have agreed upon in the Organisation, especially with regard to guaranteeing balanced geographic distribution when hiring personnel to the Technical Secretariat in line with the provisions in paragraph 44, Article VIII of the Convention. Our country is interested in the establishment of a Working Group to tackle this issue; it would work closely with the Secretariat to identify concrete actions to rectify the existing imbalances among the geographic regions. This matter is of real importance for the improved operation of the OPCW's working methods and its performance.

With regard to the elimination and destruction of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela underscores the contents of the reports periodically presented that acknowledge the effective destruction of said declared weapons and facilities as the result of collective work with the OPCW, making it possible to recognise the achievements of the Syrian Arab Republic in very challenging security conditions, while facing a multifactorial plan of aggression, both internal and external. Thus, we hope for continued successful collaboration between both parties across the full spectrum of outstanding issues, without external interference and with full respect for Syria's sovereignty (the territorial integrity and domestic policy that the Syrian people have given themselves within the principle of self-determination of peoples) and within the provisions of the Convention, as was evidenced during the visit of representatives of the Declaration Assessment Team to Syrian territory this past January.

We believe and strongly emphasise that the recent inauguration of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology represents the broadening of the OPCW's international cooperation and assistance in favour of strengthening the capacity building of the States Parties. Likewise, we believe that its modalities, mandate, operation, and budgetary needs should be developed in full consultation with the States Parties, with subsequent approval by the regulatory bodies of the OPCW.

In conclusion, the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela expresses to the Chairperson its wishes for the successful outcome of the Fifth Review Conference and 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 disarmament and the non-proliferation of chemical weapons worldwide. For this reason, we reiterate our call to all States Parties not to polarise or politicise the OPCW, and we encourage joint efforts aimed at returning to the culture of consensus and achieving a successful outcome for this session.

Finally, we request that this statement be considered an official document of the Fifth Review Conference and published on the Catalyst platform and the Organisation's website.

Thank you.

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