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CUBA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ZELMYS MARIA DOMINGUEZ CORTINA
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE OPCW AT
THE EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairman,

The delegation of Cuba welcomes you to the Chair of the Eighteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, which we are sure you will guide with the experience and professionalism which are second nature to you. We should also like to take this opportunity to welcome the new Vice-Chairpersons of the Conference of the States Parties, as well as the new Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole and to thank the Ambassador of South Africa, His Excellency Peter Goosen and the outgoing team for their work.

We want to take the opportunity to highlight the work of the Director-General, His Excellency Ahmet Üzümcü, as the head of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and to once again give him our full support for a second mandate at the head of the OPCW. This is also the right occasion to congratulate the OPCW on having been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The delegation of Cuba fully supports the statement made by the Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Members of the Non-Aligned Movement and China, which are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The existence of weapons of mass destruction is a serious threat to international peace and security. In this context, Cuba repeats its firm support for the prohibition and destruction of all weapons of mass destruction, under strict, effective international control.

The OPCW must remain focussed on the full achievement of the objectives and purpose of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The destruction of all categories of chemical weapons continues to be one of the fundamental objectives of the Convention and must be completed as soon as possible under OPCW verification, and in accordance with the relevant decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties and by the Executive Council. Otherwise, the credibility and integrity of the Convention would be placed at risk.

Cuba is firmly convinced of the Convention's contribution to the promotion of international and regional peace and security. We recognise the efforts of the Technical Secretariat to promote the universality of the Convention.



Cuba supports the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and, in that context, should like to welcome once more the recent adhesion of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Convention, which is a positive step towards achieving universality.

Cuba calls upon the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and the States Parties of this Organisation to continue to support the Syrian National Authority in implementing the Convention, in order to guarantee that the necessary resources will be made available to help the OPCW-UN Joint Mission, as well as the Syrian authorities, in completing the activities which they are conducting there, and which are related to verification, and the transfer and destruction of the chemical weapons declared by that Arab nation in accordance with the decisions adopted by the Executive Council.

We support efforts leading to a political solution to the conflict in this brother country and which fully respect the sovereignty, independence and integrity Syria and the self-determination of its people.

The OPCW has an important role to play in promoting the economic and technological process of the States Parties, especially of those which are less developed.

Regrettably, despite the efforts made by the Technical Secretariat and the international assistance and cooperation division, the full, effective and non-discriminatory application of Article XI of the Convention is still a matter outstanding on our agenda. Cuba considers it to be unacceptable that certain States Parties continue to apply unilateral measures that limit, restrict and even prohibit among States Parties free trade in, and transfer of, substances, equipment and information in the field of chemistry for peaceful purposes.

The unjust and criminal blockade imposed against Cuba by the government of the United States of America for more than 50 years is a flagrant violation of the letter and spirit of the Convention, especially Article XI thereof. We demand the immediate removal of these discriminatory restrictions, which are explicitly prohibited by the Convention.

Special relevance was accorded to the analysis of Article XI in the final report of the Third Review Conference and in the report approved at the Seventy-Fourth Session of the Executive Council. This has led to the creation of the minimal conditions necessary for a consideration, without further delay, of the proposal, presented by the Members of the Non-Aligned Movement which are States Parties to the Convention and China, for an action plan for the full, effective and non-discriminatory application of such an important Article. Therefore, Cuba stresses the need to begin, as soon as possible, a detailed discussion of this proposal in the framework of the facilitation process already under way on this topic.

The final report of the recent Review Conference, an indispensable tool for the work of the OPCW and the actions of the States Parties, must serve as a basic guide to this Conference of the States Parties.

Allow me to conclude by stressing the readiness of the delegation of Cuba to work actively and constructively with you and the other delegations. I say again that you may rely upon Cuba's full support and cooperation.

Mr Chairman, I should be obliged if this statement be distributed as an official document of the Eighteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

Many thanks.

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