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CUBA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SORAYA ÁLVAREZ NÚÑEZ
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CUBA TO THE OPCW
AT THE TWENTY-SECOND SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General, distinguished delegates,

The delegation of the Republic of Cuba welcomes H.E. Mr Abdelouahab Bellouki, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco, as Chairperson of the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Vice-Presidents.

We recognise the work performed by H.E. Sheikh Mohammed Belal, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, in managing the transparent and inclusive process for the nomination of the next Director-General of the OPCW. We reiterate our congratulations to H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias of the Kingdom of Spain on his successful nomination to the post of Director-General of the OPCW and the generosity of the former candidates for this post who acted in favour of a positive and constructive election process.

We align ourselves with the statement voiced by the honourable Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and China, which are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Strict compliance with all of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention corresponds to the firm and consistent position of Cuba in favour of the prohibition and elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

We reiterate the need for possessor States to complete their destruction plans expeditiously and safely, as stipulated in the Convention, its Verification Annex, and the corresponding decisions adopted by the States Parties. At the same time, we welcome the complete destruction of the chemical weapons arsenal in the Russian Federation under the verification process set out in the Convention.

Cuba joins in the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention this past year, an opportunity that allows us to note the important results achieved by the OPCW and its Member States in the verified destruction of chemical weapons, national implementation, international cooperation, and assistance and protection. The years to come must be characterised by joint efforts in order to overcome unresolved issues.



The OPCW has an important mandate in promoting the economic and technological progress of the States Parties, particularly developing countries, via the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI.

We recognise the efforts of the Technical Secretariat via the International Cooperation and Assistance Division, which has been deeply involved in the design and application of important programmes with a strong focus on capacity building. However, it remains difficult to assess the impact of Article XI on the economic and technological development of States in the field of chemistry for peaceful purposes. Training and education are positive steps, but they are not sufficient. We reiterate our conviction regarding the urgent need to put into place a mechanism with specific actions for the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all issues interrelated with Article XI, in an integral and balanced manner.

Cuba's position on the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI remains unchanged. It is inconceivable and unacceptable that the United States limits, restrains, and in many cases prohibits, the free exchange of chemicals, equipment, and scientific and technological information in the field of chemistry for peaceful purposes between Cuba and other States Parties; free exchange is, without exception, the right of all. These unilateral restrictions and extra-territorial laws applied by the Government of the United States under the economic, commercial, and financial blockade imposed against Cuba for nearly 60 years constitute a violation of the Convention, and Article XI thereof in particular.

Our delegation will be distributing a national document on agenda item 17 illustrating the real damage caused by the United States blockade to the general development of our economy, including in the field of chemistry. We once again demand the end of this failed policy.

We would like to note that Cuba, under the Mentorship/Partnership Programme of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, is advising the National Authority of Bolivia accordingly with the wish to use its knowledge to assist those countries that require such in implementing the Convention. We reiterate our willingness to continue sharing knowledge and best practices in this area with interested States Parties.

We welcome the completion of the planned agenda for the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW and highlight the importance of developing the corresponding work in 2018 in line with its mandate as set out in decision EC-82/DEC.2, dated 14 July 2016.

Only a transparent, inclusive, integral, and balanced discussion among the States Parties will allow the Open-Ended Working Group on the Preparation for the Fourth Review Conference to receive from the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW a contribution that will lead to a consensus.

We recall that we have presented two national documents to the Working Group regarding verification and the implementation of Article XI.

The contributions that OPCW is making in the fight against terrorism must not in any way extend beyond the mandate of the Convention, but instead should come about as the result or consequence of the implementation of its objectives. The complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, and the full, effective, and non-discriminatory

implementation of the provisions of the Convention are the only guarantees that these weapons will not fall into irresponsible hands.

Cuba recognises the efforts made by the Syrian Arab Republic in maintaining cooperation with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW after acceding to the Convention in 2013, amidst a complex domestic situation.

On several occasions we have emphasised that politicising technical matters concerning the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria presents an obstacle in the search for solutions that are both permanent and acceptable to all.

We cannot come to definitive and hasty conclusions if they cannot be corroborated or if samples are obtained in a way that does not conform with the requirements and standards of the OPCW.

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and published on the Organisation's website.

Thank you.

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