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CUBA

**OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON THE FUTURE PRIORITIES OF THE OPCW
UNDER AGENDA ITEM 18**

INTRODUCTION

The current international scenario represents an increasing number of challenges for the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its States Parties. In this context, the mandate given by the Executive Council (EC-82/DEC.2, dated 14 July 2016) to the Open-Ended Group on Future Priorities is a decisive step on the right path, which facilitates tackling outstanding tasks on the basis of a consensus, respect for the fundamental principles of the Convention, and the defence of the balance between the rights and obligations of States Parties.

As an original signatory and party to the Convention, Cuba reaffirms its commitment to the strict compliance with its provisions and the need for the destruction of all chemical weapons stockpiles, an approach consistent with Cuba’s firm and consistent position in favour of the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction and, at the same time, reiterates the will of its Government to carry out all the actions at its disposal for the sake of general, complete, and immediate disarmament, under strict and effective international control.

The work of the OPCW in the areas of chemical weapons destruction, verification, international cooperation, and assistance and protection has earned the respect and recognition of the international community for two decades, which is why the balance of these pillars should be ensured in the ongoing discussions on future priorities. The presentation of results should include contributions in all areas of interest to the Convention.

Achieving conclusions that take into account and reflect the interests and concerns of all, as part of the development of deep exchanges aimed at shaping the future of the OPCW, can only be the result of an inclusive, transparent, open, and non-discriminatory exercise. Such a process requires consideration of all working papers and contributions of States Parties on equal terms.

The relationship between disarmament and development must be taken into account, including the need to allocate part of the resources released through the implementation of disarmament agreements to economic and social development, with a view to reducing disparities between developed and developing countries.



We insist that the recommendations of the Working Group be submitted for the consideration of the policy-making organs, as we are aware of their importance in the preparatory process for the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Fourth Review Conference”).

Cuba reiterates its willingness to contribute to the achievement of satisfactory results. In this sense, Cuba will continue to actively participate in meetings and support the facilitators toward completing the proposed work agenda. National contributions on specific issues will also be provided.

CONSIDERATIONS ON VERIFICATION

As an essential activity for the fulfilment of the object and purpose of the Convention, verification will retain its importance in the future work of the OPCW. In this regard, respect for the relevant criteria previously agreed upon by the States Parties will be essential in addressing the deficiencies that could be identified in the current verification mechanism.

The need for increased effectiveness and efficiency should not place an undue burden on the chemical industry. The balance between effective verification and adequate verification of chemical industry will contribute to the development of international cooperation within the chemical field for peaceful purposes.

The development and application of methodologies that have responded to particular cases, by their very nature, should not be generalised or arbitrarily substitute the methodology established for routine inspections. The same logic should be used with respect to exceptions and specific cases, which have required the analysis of a large amount of information of different natures and the application of a variety of analytical tools. The strengthening of the analytical capacities of the OPCW should only consider essential modifications, making use of its own laboratory and the reference laboratories of the OPCW.

The replacement of existing technologies will be determined by the consent of the States Parties in their use and by their scientific justification. In all cases, any risks concerning the effectiveness and efficiency of verification activities, as well as the compatibility of new technologies with the procedures set out in the Convention, should be clearly recorded.

The Scientific Advisory Board will continue to study cases and examine the relevance of applying new developments in science and technology to the verification process. The results should be considered as proposals for analysis and kept within the limits established for carrying out the actions foreseen in the provisions of the Convention.

The acquisition by the OPCW of the necessary equipment for the personnel carrying out verification activities will preserve the balance between the technical standards for the fulfilment of their functions and the growing existence of new technologies.

The verification process will be carried out, without exception, according to the criteria of integrity and independence, and in accordance with all established procedures.

The verification of industry, the improvement of analytical capacities, and the modernisation of information and knowledge management within the verification regime will lead to the

development and evaluation of national control mechanisms to prevent the resurgence of stockpiles of chemical weapons in the world.

Even after the total elimination of all chemical weapons stockpiles in the world, the OPCW will continue to be the global repository of knowledge and expertise in the verification of non-possession of chemical weapons and their destruction.

Regarding financial implications, OPCW verification activities should be properly planned in its annual budget process, using a rationalisation approach for the use of resources and with a view to reducing or minimising the costs of these activities. Such an approach would have a positive impact on the balance between the maintenance of verification activities and the economic interests of States Parties—developing States in particular.

According to paragraph 98 of the Report of the Consultative Group on Future Priorities of the OPCW (S/951/2011), with future resources released from chemical weapons verification, greater attention should be given to the application of Article XI. The effective implementation of this important article, which affects all members of the Convention, will contribute to the overall objective of increasing the level of compliance.

In relation to qualification actions carried out with OPCW staff, they will correspond more closely to those carried out with States Parties and their National Authorities, including in the use of possible new analytical tools, for verification activities and maintenance of the integrity of the Convention.

Finally, verification activities in cooperation with both other United Nations bodies and bodies outside of the United Nations system will be carried out in accordance with the agreements reached by the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW. Also, if new agreements are required in this area, they must have the corresponding approval of the decision-making organs.

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