SURINAME

Statement
on behalf of the Member States of the
Union of South American Nations
(UNASUR)

by H.E. Kitty Sweeb
Deputy Permanent Representative
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on Other Weapons of Mass Destruction
in the Thematic Debate of the First Committee,
68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

24 October 2013
Mr. Chairman,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR).

Allow me on behalf of UNASUR Member States to recall that in the Declaration on Security of the Americas, signed in 2003, our countries declared “our objective to make the Americas a region free of biological and chemical weapons”. In addition, through Resolution 2107, of 2005, adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, we decided unanimously to “fulfill concretely the shared commitment of Member States to make the Americas a region free of biological and chemical weapons”.

UNASUR States particularly congratulate the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for recently having been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its important work.

Mr. Chairman,

UNASUR States strongly condemn the existence of chemical and biological weapons and reiterate that their use is a crime against humanity. The catastrophic consequences of their use must be prevented through their complete elimination.

UNASUR reaffirms its commitment to the prohibition of the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and to their total elimination, as agreed in the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. We also support its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation, and encourage the continued work towards its universalization.

Mr. Chairman,

UNASUR condemns the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Union welcomes the accession of Syria to the Convention. We also hope that the decision adopted on 27 September 2013 on the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons, by the Executive Council of the OPCW, endorsed by Security Council Resolution 2118, will be implemented in an expeditious and safe manner.
While highlighting the growing participation of States in the Convention, we call upon States that have not acceded to it, to do so promptly. We also express our appreciation for the efforts made by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in promoting the universalization of the Convention and the full implementation of all its provisions.

We reiterate the importance of the agreement reached in December 2011, which stipulated a framework for the completion of the destruction of the remaining chemical arsenals, while preserving the integrity of the Convention and the credibility of the OPCW.

In this regard, we call upon the chemical-weapon countries to fulfill their obligations under the terms stipulated by the Convention and to destroy their arsenals. We also call upon all States possessing chemical weapons to eliminate them and to join the Convention promptly, without any condition.

UNASUR notes that the provisions of the Convention should be applied so as to avoid hampering the economic or technological development of States Parties and international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under the Convention, as well as those relating to international scientific and technical information and chemicals and equipment for the production, processing or use of chemicals for purposes not prohibited under the Convention.

UNASUR States express their appreciation to the Technical Secretariat's contribution towards the development and effectiveness of the Organization, which helps to achieve the object and purpose of the Convention and to ensure the full implementation of its provisions, including those for international verification of compliance, while serving as a forum for consultation and cooperation to States Parties.

UNASUR States appreciate the international cooperation and assistance provided by OPCW, including through the promotion of annual events on the assistance and protection against chemical weapons.

UNASUR welcomes the outcome of the Third Review Conference of the Convention for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, held in The Hague from 8 to 19 of April last. We underline, in particular, the adoption by consensus of its final report, which addressed all aspects of the Convention and made important recommendations on its continued implementation.
Mr. Chairman,

UNASUR also reaffirms the fundamental importance of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC). We ensure our readiness to continue cooperating actively and constructively to advance the goals of full implementation and universalization of the Convention.

We share, with many other States, the idea of designing and implementing additional measures to ensure effective enforcement of the banning. The Convention lacks the means to ensure or assure compliance with the commitments by the signatory States. We support the negotiation of a Protocol to the BWC that establishes an effective verification regime.

UNASUR Member States have actively participated in the 2012 Meeting of the States Parties, held in Geneva from 10 - 14 December 2012. We welcome the discussions that took place in line with the Standing Agenda adopted at the Seventh Review Conference of the BWC, in particular those related to strengthening cooperation and assistance under Article X.

UNASUR remains convinced that national measures translate obligations undertaken by States into practical and effective actions. We reiterate, therefore, our support for the Support Unit for the Implementation of the Convention (ISU), which has lent its assistance to Member States.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, UNASUR reaffirms that the Conventions for the prohibition of chemical and biological weapons are vital international legal instruments to guide multilateral efforts in the struggle for the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction under strict and effective international control.

Thank you.