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MOROCCO

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ABDELOUAHAB BELLOUKI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO TO THE
OPCW AT THE NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,

It gives my delegation great pleasure to express its full support for the outstanding Chairpersonship of H.E. Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez, the Permanent Representative of El Salvador. Mr Chairperson, you have led the work of the sessions of this august Executive Council (“the Council”) with wisdom and skill during your term. I am convinced that the leadership and abilities that you displayed during your successful tenure as Chairperson of the Council, and indeed of the Fourth Review Conference in 2018, will serve you well in accomplishing your future missions and responsibilities with great success.

I should also like to express my delegation’s warmest thanks to the Director-General of the OPCW, Mr Fernando Arias, and to the staff of the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”), for their dedication and professionalism. My delegation welcomes the comprehensive and informative report presented by the Director-General for this session, and the personal consideration he has given to equitable geographical distribution and gender balance in regard to the composition of the staff of our Organisation.

Furthermore, I welcome the appropriate measures that the Secretariat has adopted with a view to protecting our health, minimising the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our work, and allowing the OPCW’s activities to be carried out under the best possible conditions.

Additionally, my delegation fully aligns itself with the statement of the African Group, delivered by our dedicated coordinator H.E. Ambassador Lawrence Lenayapa, Permanent Representative of Kenya, and with the statement of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement and China, delivered by H.E. Ambassador Fikrat Akhundov, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

True to its position in favour of a balanced and optimal implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”), my country reaffirms its support for capacity building in the States Parties, particularly developing ones, to help them comply with all of their obligations under the Convention, and thereby effectively contribute to the unrelenting fight against the proliferation of the chemical threat worldwide.



In this framework, Morocco reiterates its constant support for the Director-General's initiative to put in place a Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa, in order to optimise Convention implementation on the African continent. In this connection, my country, which welcomes the progress made during the previous four phases of this Programme, is strongly committed to collective cooperation among all stakeholders.

My delegation also welcomes the successful implementation of the fifth phase, despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, and commends the work accomplished by the Programme Coordinator, Mr Dawsar Drissi. His positive interaction with the Steering Committee has given the Programme visibility and substance through an inclusive approach.

Furthermore, my delegation is of the view that the continued success and positive momentum of the Africa Programme depends on a more stable and sustainable method of financing. In this regard, my delegation renews its gratitude to the donors for their voluntary contributions.

Morocco underscores the need to promote mutual capacity building through South-South cooperation that takes into account the specific realities of each State Party and each subregion. In this respect, my delegation is pleased that an online course for first responders from States Parties from North Africa and the Sahel was held from 7 to 10 December 2020. This basic online course, organised jointly by the Moroccan Regional Training Centre for North Africa and the Sahel and the OPCW, improved the emergency management skills of African experts in regard to incidents involving chemical weapons and toxic industrial chemicals.

Morocco expresses, in the strongest terms, its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances, and for whatever reason. To achieve a world forever free from chemical weapons, which remains our common strategic objective, and considering the current circumstances, my country reiterates its appeal to the States Parties to continue working in a spirit of unity and to promote constructive dialogue in order to safeguard the norm, to strengthen the unity and integrity of the Organisation, and to preserve its technical nature.

Moreover, in regard to the latest reports of the Declaration Assessment Team, my country is pleased to note the verified and complete destruction of the chemical weapons production facilities declared by the Syrian Arab Republic, and encourages the continuation of a constructive dialogue between that State Party and the Secretariat, for the optimal implementation of the provisions of the Convention and the relevant decisions on this subject, as well as to resolve all of the outstanding issues.

The threat of non-State actors and chemical terrorism remains a major concern for all countries. In this connection, my delegation welcomes the useful activities undertaken by the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, chaired by H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Madonsela, the Permanent Representative of South Africa, and by the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors.

My delegation reiterates its support for the continued consultations led by the co-facilitators, H.E. Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, the Permanent Representative of Uruguay, and by H.E. Ambassador Matthew Neuhaus, the Permanent Representative of Australia, with a view to reconciling the different points of view on the issues related to organisational governance. It should be emphasised that a constructive and inclusive dialogue between the States Parties on questions of governance will serve to support Convention implementation, and to strengthen our Organisation's streamlined operations.

My country is delighted with the progress made in the project to upgrade the OPCW Laboratory to a Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre). The ChemTech Centre is crucial to the optimal implementation of the Convention. My delegation welcomes the exchange of points of view that the Director-General initiated among the regional groups to ensure that all States Parties take ownership of the activities at the Centre. He presented a road map which, once approved, will ensure that the Centre has the necessary visibility, actions, and resources to achieve its objectives, which should go beyond capacity building and training. The stable and sustainable funding of the Centre in the regular budget will exemplify our unfailing joint commitment.

Regarding the future priorities of the Centre, particularly in terms of the capacity building of States Parties, my delegation would like to emphasise, for information purposes, its interest in the following elements:

- (a) strengthening of the verification regime, in particular to fight against chemical terrorism and to disrupt the *modi operandi* of non-State actors;
- (b) the exchange of expertise and the strengthening of laboratory analytical capabilities, as well as the proposal of tailor-made training to any countries that make a request, in order to bring them up to standard; and
- (c) national capacity building in the area of prevention against terrorist attacks involving chemicals.

I thank you for your kind attention.

I would ask that this statement be considered as an official document of the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Council.

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