

7 APRIL 2008

**STATEMENT**  
on behalf of the  
**AFRICAN GROUP OF STATES PARTIES**  
**TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**  
to the  
**Second Review Conference**  
**7-18 April 2008**

Mr. Chairman,

I have the privilege to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Allow me, on behalf of the African States Parties to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the Second Review Conference. We assure you of our full cooperation and support, and we are confident that you will guide this Conference's work to a successful conclusion.

Ten years after the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Second Review Conference represents a major milestone in the history of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Let me therefore express our sincere congratulations to the Organisation - the States Parties as well as the leadership and the staff of the Technical Secretariat.

Our congratulations and gratitude are also extended to the Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group on the Preparation of the Review Conference, His Excellency, Ambassador Lyn Parker of the United Kingdom, for his leadership and contribution to the planning and preparations for this Conference.

We also wish to commend the Director-General, Ambassador Rogelio Pfirter and the staff of the Technical Secretariat, for their invaluable role and support in the months leading up to this Review Conference.

Mr. Chairman,

The African Group of States Parties associate themselves with the statement made by his Excellency Ambassador De Los Reyes Ramos of Cuba, in his capacity as Chairperson of the Non-aligned Movement and China.

The OPCW has recorded significant progress in the implementation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention in the past ten years. Examples in this regard are the near Universality of the Convention with the Republic of the Congo recently becoming the 183<sup>rd</sup> State Party of the CWC. More than 27 metric tonnes of chemical agent have been destroyed and verified by the Technical Secretariat. Albania also became the first possessor State Party to complete the

destruction of its chemical weapons stockpile, and we extend our wholehearted congratulations to it for this accomplishment. The Technical Secretariat has further undertaken more than 3000 inspections at military and industrial sites in 80 States Parties, without any case of non-compliance being reported; and a large number of nationals from developing States Parties have so far benefited from assistance and cooperation programmes provided by the OPCW.

Despite all of these accomplishments much still remains to be done to ensure that all pillars of the Convention are fully implemented.

Mr. Chairman,

The African States Parties reiterate their firm conviction that the destruction of all chemical weapons remains the primary objective of this Organisation. It is important that States Parties continue to work towards this objective with all seriousness in order to rid the world of these weapons of mass destruction.

We commend the progress made by possessor States Parties in their ongoing destruction activities as well as their efforts to enhance the destruction of their chemical weapons stockpiles.

However, more than 60 percent of chemical weapons stockpiles still have to be destroyed before the final destruction deadline in 2012. The African States Parties therefore look forward to firm commitments from possessor States Parties, in the outcome document of the Review Conference, to intensify their efforts to ensure the completion of destruction within the deadlines provided for in the Convention and in accordance with the decisions of the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of States Parties.

Mr. Chairman,

The African States Parties have made great strides since the First Review Conference in terms of the implementation of their Article VII obligations, with almost all State Parties on the Continent having established National Authorities. We remain fully committed to the object and purpose of the Convention and are therefore hard at work, in line with our constitutional processes, to adopt the necessary measures to implement our obligations in accordance with the Convention.

It remains important, however, that adequate and timely assistance continue to be provided to requesting States Parties in order to fulfil their obligations under Article VII. We look forward to the final outcome document of this Conference further extending such assistance to African States Parties, in a cooperative manner.

Mr. Chairman,

It is necessary in the course of this Review Conference that comprehensive attention be paid to the full and equitable implementation of all the provisions of the Convention. In this regard we are specifically referring to the full implementation of one of the fundamental pillars of the Convention, namely Article XI. We believe the Second Review Conference should reaffirm States Parties' commitment to the full implementation of this Article. The Review Conference should also provide clear guidance for the development of concrete measures within an agreed framework, so as to ensure the promotion of international cooperation in the field of chemical activities through the exchange of scientific and technical information, chemicals and equipment. The primary objective of these measures should be to assist States Parties in the development of their chemical industrial capacity.

We wish to stress that the full implementation of Article XI contributes to enhancing international peace and security and African States Parties are still of the strong belief that the most appropriate mechanism for the effective implementation of this Article is a Plan of Action.

While we welcome the existing international cooperation programmes of the Technical Secretariat, the resources allocated for these programmes have not kept pace with the increase in membership of the Organisation. This has resulted in the demand for such programmes far outstripping the support which the Technical Secretariat can provide. We therefore wish to reiterate the importance of a steady increase on an annual basis in the amount of regular budget funding allocated for international cooperation.

Mr. Chairman

The Group of African States Parties also recalls the need for the Programme for Africa to be implemented as soon as possible, and in close consultation with the Group. In this regard we call for specific attention to be paid to, amongst others, raising awareness of the Convention on the African Continent, providing assistance in the drafting and implementation of national implementing legislation, assistance to African delegates to attend the Conferences of States Parties and National Authorities meetings as well as increasing the number of opportunities for African States Parties to benefit from programmes aimed at the transfer of skills and capacity building.

We also appeal to donor States Parties to increase voluntary contributions so as to provide additional assistance to African States Parties, through the Programme for Africa.

Mr. Chairman,

African States Parties attach particular importance to the implementation of Article X which provides for assistance and protection to States Parties against chemical weapons. Important elements in the implementation of this Article include the need for practical capacity building as well as the transfer of material

and equipment to deal with chemical incidents on a regional and sub-regional basis. Current chemical industrial development as well as the transportation of large quantities of chemicals across borders is a clear example which calls for the provisions of this Article to be extended to cover a broader range of chemical incidents.

It is therefore important that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Review Conference recommend that the current training and assistance programmes of the OPCW, be augmented to focus on establishing or strengthening States Parties' capacity to respond to a chemical attack or incident. The Organisation should also evaluate, and adjust where necessary, its procedures for mobilising and coordinating assistance, including equipment, to ensure that it can adequately respond to requests from African States Parties.

The threat of global terrorism which confronts us today has given added urgency to the work of our Organisation. African States Parties believe the Second Review Conference should underline the role that the OPCW has to play among international organisations in preventing access to chemical weapons by non-state actors and by providing assistance in the event of a chemical attack. In this framework, the implementation of Article X is of particular importance.

We welcome all positive collaboration and cooperation between the OPCW, States Parties, regional centres for counter-terrorism and other international organisations in combating the global threat of terrorism.

Mr. Chairman,

We are all aware of the low, as well as decreasing level of representation of African nationals in the professional ranks of the Technical Secretariat, particularly in senior and policy making positions. This in no way reflects a lack of qualified African nationals, or a lack of interest in the work of the Organisation. It does, however, highlight the need for the Organisation's recruitment process to be more proactive in identifying qualified African candidates so as to ensure equitable geographical representation in the professional ranks of the Organisation.

Mr. Chairman,

The OPCW has made great strides in the past ten years of existence. Nevertheless, we all agree that there are still significant improvements to be made. It is the expectation of the African States Parties that this Review Conference will afford Member States the opportunity for a thorough and critical examination of the implementation and progress of the Convention in order to guide it to even greater accomplishments.

I thank you for your attention.