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UGANDA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MIRJAM BLAAK SOW
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF UGANDA TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

Allow me to take this opportunity on behalf of the delegation of Uganda to thank you, Madam Chairperson, Your Excellency Odette Melono of Cameroon, for leading this Eighty-Second Session of the Executive Council. We are confident that you will steer the deliberations of this session to a successful conclusion. My delegation offers you its unequivocal support throughout the session.

My delegation highly appreciates the informative report delivered this morning by the Director-General of the OPCW, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, and wishes to express our appreciation to the Director-General for the professional manner in which he continues to manage the affairs of the Organisation with the assistance of the Technical Secretariat.

My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement of the States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Convention and China, as well as the statement by the African Group of States.

I would like to address Uganda's experience in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the enactment of national legislation. In the African Group statement, there was reference to Article VII encouraging States Parties to fully implement their obligations, and I would like to share with you, Madam Chairperson and distinguished delegates, how Uganda became the first beneficiary of the Influential Visitors Programme, which assisted Uganda in implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention and successfully enacting its national legislation in November 2015.

Uganda ratified the Convention on 30 November 2001 and established an interim National Authority in 2002. The National Authority embarked on the development of a law to implement the Convention at the national level. There was some confusion regarding the name of the draft law, and it took a lot of discussion before agreeing on its title. Consultations were held with relevant stakeholders in government ministries, departments, and agents. Finally, the title was agreed upon as 'The Toxic Chemicals Prohibition and Control Bill'.



There was also delay caused by some confusion as to why the National Authority was not the Ministry of Defence, as immediately when people hear the term ‘chemical weapons’, they associate it with military and defence issues. In Uganda’s case, as a non-possessor State, it was found more effective to appoint a National Authority in a Ministry that deals with public health inspectors, many of whom are chemists who have the mandate to inspect factories and can identify the chemicals used.

The OPCW, through the Technical Secretariat, provided training for members of parliament on the need for the development of national legislation to implement the Convention in the country. A team of legal experts from the Technical Secretariat delivered this sensitisation training in Uganda in 2008.

The Technical Secretariat also trained legal drafters and National Authority representatives to support the process of developing the appropriate legislation. However, the term of parliament elapsed before passing the bill.

The next parliament was elected in 2011 with new members and therefore sensitisation had to start all over again. In this regard, Uganda took advantage of the OPCW’s Influential Visitors Programme, becoming its first beneficiary. The Right Honourable Rebecca Kadaga, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda, led a delegation to the OPCW in The Hague under said programme in April 2015. The delegation comprised of three members of the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Affairs and the Minister from the host Ministry of the interim National Authority.

The visit was very beneficial to the delegation as it gained better knowledge and understanding about the Chemical Weapons Convention and the importance of the urgent adoption of National Legislation for effective legal implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This was particularly important to the Speaker of Parliament, who heads the hectic parliamentary process, especially in a period when many bills are awaiting parliamentary approval and adoption. The OPCW Technical Secretariat in The Hague organised an excellent programme for the Uganda delegation, which resulted in developing a comprehensive follow-up action plan for Uganda for the adoption of the draft legislation to implement the Convention by December 2015.

The follow-up activities were:

On 13 August 2015, OPCW technical officers visited Uganda and sensitised members of the parliament of Uganda on the Chemical Weapons Convention and the need to put in place national legislative measures to implement the Convention. The workshop was attended by a good number of the members of parliament—in fact a total of 190 members of parliament and 150 technical staff and the media attended the workshop.

Various explanations of the Convention’s obligations and objectives were provided as members of parliament from diverse backgrounds required clarification on a variety of questions. This improved their understanding of the Convention and its uniqueness from other UN conventions.

OPCW staff members Mr Kesrat Sukasam, Head of Implementation Support, and Mr Danilo Campisi, Legal Officer, facilitated the meeting, which was held at the conference hall in the parliament building in Kampala.

This meeting made a great breakthrough as far as understanding the objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention among the members of parliament. At its ordinary plenary session on 12 November 2015, parliament discussed and passed the Toxic Chemicals Prohibition and Control Bill, 2015.

The Toxic Chemicals Prohibition and Control Bill, 2015 was sent to the President, who later signed it, and it thus became law. The National Authority is now developing the regulations for the implementation of the Act.

Uganda's achievements include the recently passed Toxic Chemical Prohibition & Control Act, 2015, which is in line with Article VII of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Act will regulate scheduled chemicals listed under the Convention and unscheduled or other toxic industrial chemicals within the country.

Madam Chairperson,

Uganda has provided this overview to shed light on the Influential Visitors Programme and its contribution to the understanding of important obligations to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention at the national level. It is our wish that other States Parties will emulate Uganda's example by taking the advantage of the OPCW Influential Visitors Programme to inform their respective legislative frameworks in order to enact their national legislation measures.

I would like to thank all staff of the OPCW for their dedication and contributions to Uganda's success in nationally implementing the Convention. Uganda remains a proud and active State Party and wishes to further contribute to a world free of chemical weapons.

I am requesting you, Madam Chair, to have this statement adopted as an official document for the Eighty-Second Session of the Executive Council.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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