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MOROCCO

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

Madam Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished colleagues,

Allow me to begin Madam Chairperson, Jana Reinišová, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic, by expressing my delegation's delight in seeing you chair this august Executive Council ("the Council"). I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation throughout your term to help you guide the work of our sessions to fruitful conclusions.

I also have the pleasure to commend the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal from Bangladesh, who demonstrated the excellence of his professional and personal qualities during his time as Chairperson.

I should also like to pay a warm tribute to Director-General Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü who, during his two brilliant terms, elevated the crucial role of our Organisation within the weapons of mass destruction non-proliferation regime. His unfailing commitment and strong determination to tackle the challenges of chemical disarmament, coupled with the dynamic commitment of the members of the Technical Secretariat ("the Secretariat"), have greatly contributed to the achievement of the noble objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention"). I also wish to express to the next Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, the Kingdom of Morocco's full confidence and support in the performance of his duties and accomplishment of his mission.

Morocco fully aligns itself with the statement of the African Group, which I had the honour of delivering, and also with the statement of the Non-Aligned Movement and China, delivered by Ms Haifa Aissami Madah, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.



My delegation warmly welcomes the accession of the State of Palestine to the Convention, a move that breathes new life into the process of universalisation of this international instrument, something we would very much like to see.

In a context marked by a sudden increase in the use of chemical weapons, the States Parties are called upon to redouble their efforts in order to protect the norm from being eroded. Accordingly, Morocco reiterates its strong condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances, and for whatever reason.

Remaining true to its proactive and constructive approach, my country, which joined the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, established on 23 January 2018 in Paris, supports the efforts of States Parties to provide the Organisation with the tools necessary to attribute responsibility in a manner that is impartial, independent, and effective.

This new initiative must be undertaken in a spirit of consensus, all while preserving the unity and technical character of our Organisation. This instrument should be mobilising and inclusive, and based on an equitable geographical representation, in accordance with both international law and legality and the principles of the Convention.

With regard to the destruction of declared stockpiles of chemical weapons, my country welcomes the full completion of the process to destroy chemical weapons in Libya, the Russian Federation, and Iraq. Moreover, we would like to take this opportunity to strongly encourage the steady continuation of efforts aimed at completely destroying the remaining stockpiles of chemical weapons.

While we note the recent results of the destruction of chemical weapons production facilities declared by the Syrian Arab Republic, my country encourages continued dialogue between that State Party and the Secretariat, to ensure optimal implementation of the provisions of the Convention and the relevant decisions on this subject.

In this context, my delegation has taken note of the latest report of the Declaration Assessment Team and observes that, despite the progress made, several outstanding questions remain unanswered.

Furthermore, my country has taken note of the recent reports of the Fact-Finding Mission published by the Secretariat, in particular those regarding the incidents of use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic: in Ltamenah (S/1636/2018, dated 13 June 2018) and in Douma (S/1645/2018, dated 6 July 2018).

My delegation strongly condemns the proven and continued use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and underscores the need to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Concerning the fourth phase of the OPCW Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa (“the Africa Programme”), launched in January 2017, my delegation wishes to reiterate its support for the Secretariat’s efforts which, in concert with the African countries, have put in place a number of activities to strengthen capacities. In this regard, my delegation would underscore the need to undertake a thorough evaluation of the Africa Programme that takes into account the realities of each State Party on the ground, which would allow the beneficiaries to take better advantage of the Programme. In this connection, Morocco welcomes the convening last week of the first meeting of the Steering Committee, which was

established in order to provide guidance and advice for the effective implementation of the Programme.

Morocco wishes to reiterate its gratitude for the voluntary contributions to the Africa Programme and considers, on the other hand, that its success unquestionably depends on more stable and sustainable financing.

On another note, my delegation wishes to reiterate the increased importance that should be attached to the implementation of Article X (Assistance and Protection Against Chemical Weapons) and Article XI (Economic and Technological Development) of the Convention.

With regard to the fight against terrorism, my country, in support of the efforts and activities undertaken by the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors, welcomes the recent appointment of Ambassador Oji Ngofa of Nigeria as the new Chairperson of the Working Group. My delegation offers him its full confidence and support in the discharge of his duties.

In this connection, it should be noted that the use of chemicals as weapons by non-State actors ought to be a constant concern for us all. African States Parties, with the support of the Secretariat, must build the capacities to deal with such a risk.

Accordingly, my delegation wishes to express its support for any initiative aimed at countering this threat, in particular the establishment of the Rapid Response and Assistance Mission, as well as the organisation of key meetings such as the first Conference on Countering Chemical Terrorism, which took place on 7 and 8 June 2018 in The Hague.

Morocco also welcomes the work carried out by the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities of the OPCW, under the able leadership of Co-Chairpersons Ambassador Sabine Nölke of Canada and Ambassador Vusi Bruce Koloane of South Africa.

In the same connection, my delegation would like to express its full support for the Working Group for the Preparation of the Fourth Review Conference, chaired by Ambassador I Gusti Agung Weska Puja of Indonesia.

With regard to this process, Morocco underscores the need to strengthen protective capacities and to improve coordination between all stakeholders at the national and regional level. In this connection, improving the capabilities of laboratories in terms of human and material resources is critical to mitigating the impact of any chemical incident.

Most recently, from 19 to 21 June 2018, Morocco had the honour of welcoming, in Marrakesh, the Sixteenth Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties in Africa, attended by the delegations of 38 African States Parties as well as six regional and international organisations. This meeting served as a forum during which the States Parties of the region were able to examine issues related to trade in chemicals, and the role of customs in the enforcement of the Convention's transfers regime for scheduled chemicals. That regional meeting helped to better determine African priorities and to expand our reflection on the ways to strengthen cooperation between the OPCW Secretariat and African States Parties.

To conclude, I should like to underscore that the city of Marrakesh will also have the privilege of hosting the Eighteenth Annual Workshop to Coordinate Assistance and Protection, to be held from 29 to 31 October 2018. This exercise will allow States Parties and the Secretariat to interact with a view to gathering input from all regions in order to make recommendations on how to improve assistance and protection programmes, the aim being to help States Parties discharge their obligations under Article X of the Convention.

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

I thank you for your attention.

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