



OPCW

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Thirty-Third Meeting
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NIGERIA

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP
TO THE THIRTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

On behalf of the African Group, I would like to welcome you to the chair and to assure you of the Group's commitment to work with you and other delegations to successfully address the very important and serious issues that lie before us.

Mr Chairperson,

While the United Nations Secretary-General's investigation is still continuing and the investigation team has still to complete its investigation of the other pending credible allegations (before completing its final report), the African Group was deeply concerned to receive the interim report of the United Nations Secretary-General on the investigation that was undertaken, with the support of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), into the allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Ghouta area of Damascus. The confirmation that chemical weapons, and more particularly sarin gas, had been used in the twenty-first century – a hundred years after this horrendous weapon plagued the battlefields of the First World War – is an event that we had hoped and believed would never again confront us. The fact that these weapons were also used on fellow citizens of the same country increases our horror at the events that the Secretary-General's investigation team reported on.

The African Group deplores and condemns the use of chemical weapons in Syria in the strongest possible terms. We call on all of the parties to the conflict in Syria to resolve the conflict in a peaceful way and we underline the need for the parties to come together in dialogue without delay. Any political transition in Syria must come about as a result of the will of the Syrian people and not as a result of a force of arms. There is no cause that could justify the use of weapons of mass destruction, by anyone or anybody, under any circumstances.

We welcome the outcome of the bilateral consultations between the Russian Federation and the United States of America and the accession of Syria to the Chemical Weapons Convention. These are positive developments and victories for rational thought, which have also moved us away from a further deepening of the conflict in Syria.



Mr Chairperson,

Syria's accession to the Convention now places the onus on the States Parties to the Convention to ensure that the OPCW makes its contribution to the eradication of the threat of chemical weapons in Syria. The complete destruction of these chemical weapons will ensure that the Syrian people are never again threatened by their use. It is for this reason that the African Group supports the decision (EC-M-33/DEC/CRP.1/Rev.1) adopted by the Executive Council on 27 September 2013 and the provisional application of the Convention by Syria that would provide for the implementation of its provisions in that country.

It is our conviction that the Convention contains all of the necessary elements and provisions that would allow for the speedy destruction of the chemical weapons stockpile in Syria, and of the facilities that have been used for their development and production. To ensure that we continue to reinforce a rules-based international system, it will also be of importance that we – as States Parties to the Convention and as members of the Executive Council – ensure that we act in accordance with the Convention. It is to this end, also, that other international bodies, such as the United Nations Security Council, should use their authority to support the OPCW and the States Parties to the Convention to implement the Convention and the decisions that are to be taken by the OPCW on the implementation of the Convention in Syria. It is essential that the actions undertaken to address the particular situation in Syria be duly considered and authorised by the Executive Council as provided for under the Convention.

The African Group also supports the flexibility afforded to the Director-General to re-appoint former OPCW inspectors and/or to extend the contracts of inspectors currently in the employ of the Organisation. It is clear that the additional responsibilities that the Technical Secretariat will have with regard to Syria will require that we provide the Director-General with the resources that he will require. The African Group would not be in favour of using non-OPCW personnel to undertake OPCW work in Syria.

Mr Chairperson,

The African Group is strongly of the view that the deplorable use of chemical weapons in Syria reinforces the absolute necessity for us to achieve the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It also underlines the continued obligation of the States Parties concerned to achieve the complete destruction – without further or added delay – of all categories of chemical weapons in accordance with the obligations that are contained in the Convention. It will only be through the speedy destruction of the remaining chemical weapons and through the universal application of the Convention that we will be able to effectively eliminate the threat of the use of chemical weapons becoming a reality again. We acknowledge that the challenge of achieving universality is a challenge that we will have to address in Africa, as it is a challenge that we will have to address in the Middle East and in Asia – where the other States are to be found that have not yet joined the Convention. The African States Parties call on all of these States to join the Convention without further delay.

Mr Chairperson, I thank you and I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this meeting of the Council.