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**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP OF STATES PARTIES
TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ABDELOUAHAB BELLOUKI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO
TO THE OPCW AT THE EIGHTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

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

First, I would like to welcome back H.E. Ambassador Jana Reinišová of Czech Republic as Chairperson of the Executive Council, and reiterate the Group's full support and confidence in Her Excellency's able leadership to steer this session to a successful conclusion.

The African Group associates itself with the Statement of the Group of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and China, delivered by the Group's Coordinator, H.E. Ambassador Haifa Aissami Madah, Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the OPCW.

Madam Chairperson,

The African Group warmly welcomes the new Director-General, H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias, and assures him of its full support and constant cooperation in promoting and strengthening the role of the Organisation as one of the most successful disarmament mechanisms. In addition, we express our appreciation for his informative and comprehensive statement delivered this morning.

The African Group was encouraged by the first official visit of the Director-General in his capacity as Head of the Organisation to an African State Party, Algeria, and hopes that more such high level visits will be undertaken to deepen the cooperation between the African States Parties and the OPCW.

Africa's commitment to a world free of Chemical Weapons remains solid, as reflected by the fact that almost all African countries are Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. This is why the African Group welcomes and strongly supports the decision made by the Conference of the States Parties, C-21/5, dated 2 December 2016, on the continuation of the



fourth phase of the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa, which began on 1 January 2017 for another three-year period.

While recognising the value of voluntary contributions to this Programme, we strongly reiterate our call that the Programme should be anchored on the regular budget so as to ensure its predictability and sustainability. In this regard, we appreciate and welcome the ongoing discussions between the African States Parties, the voluntary contributors, and the Technical Secretariat, as an important step for the achievement of the objectives and purpose of the Africa Programme.

In this regard, the Group urges all stakeholders to engage an inclusive dialogue through the Technical Secretariat and the States Parties, as well as the Steering Committee of the Africa Programme, to better address the specific needs of African States Parties.

Accordingly, the African Group welcomes the follow-up process regarding the Africa Programme, in line with the Director-General's Note of the 27 February 2017, to achieve its concrete objectives. In this respect, we appreciate the pragmatic and inclusive approach adopted by the Director-General to enhance the Africa Programme, as mentioned in the Note of 12 September 2017. To this end, the Group looks forward to expedite the release of a detailed report of the first meeting of the Steering Committee, held on 2 July 2018.

The African Group recognises the work done by the International Cooperation and Assistance Division regarding the implementation of Africa Programme, and encourages the Technical Secretariat to continue its efforts to enhance national capacities for the implementation of the Convention, the development of tailor-made Assistance and Protection activities, the support the establishment of designated laboratories, and the peaceful use of chemistry.

The African Group wishes to reiterate its continued support of the OPCW in the area of sensitisation, especially for decision makers at the regional Organisation, the African Union, and its Regional Economic Communities through the various special programmes of the Technical Secretariat's.

In this regard, we believe that the reinforcement of the existing Memorandum of Understanding, which is the legal framework of cooperation between the African Union and the OPCW is timely and relevant. This would develop and enhance the capabilities of the African States Parties to deal with the new emerging challenges related to the full and effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Group urges the Technical Secretariat to take all necessary measures to ensure equitable geographical and gender representation in its recruitment processes and have such representation duly reflected at all levels of the Organisation, in particular professional levels.

The African Group appreciates the planned upgrading of the OPCW Chemical Laboratory to a Centre for Chemistry and Technology. We are confident that this new initiative will play a significant role in capacity building in the area of research and training, especially for the African countries. The Group stresses that the question of funding model of this venture should be resolved by consensus.

Madam Chairperson,

We encourage the international community to continue its efforts to ensure the complete and full universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention and reiterate our long-standing principled position towards the achievement of complete disarmament in line with the Convention and the PMO's decisions, under strict and effective international control. The accession of the State of Palestine is a significant step towards these purposes. Equally, we call on the other remaining non-member States to join the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Madam Chairperson,

The African Group welcomes the announcement of the completion of destruction of all Chemical Weapons Production Facilities declared by the Syrian Arab Republic, and encourages the continuous dialogue between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Technical Secretariat on all pending issues, and look forward to positive outcomes of this cooperation. Furthermore, we urge both parties to continue the implementation of the relevant decisions.

The African Group values the merits of the OPCW being a technical Organisation, and encourages all Member States and stakeholders to work closely together towards preserving this nature.

Madam Chairperson,

On Education and Outreach, the African Group recognises the importance of the programmes in achieving the main objectives of the Convention. The Group welcomes the work done by the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach, including all regional meetings held to contribute to formulating recommendations on education and outreach. The African Group views this Programme as an essential tool for enhancing and developing a culture of implementation of the Convention, through cooperation with the African Union and the African Regional Economic Communities.

We believe that after 20 years of the entry into force of the Convention, it is necessary that our concerns, especially regarding the equal implementation of the four pillars of the Convention, that is Articles VI, VII, X, and XI, should now be carried out in an efficient manner. This should also be adequately reflected in future budgetary decisions.

The African Group commends the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T), and the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors. We look forward to the continuous facilitation of discussions, to promote global chemical security in light of the relevant Executive Council's decision. In this regard, the African Group believes that the constant coordination between international organisations and relevant stakeholders is crucial in building awareness of chemical security and advancing global efforts to prevent chemical terrorism and the re-emergence of chemical weapons, within the scope of the Convention and the Organisation's mandate.

Whilst aware of the re-emergence of chemical weapons and the threat of chemical terrorism as some of the main challenges for the Organisation, the African Group advocates that the future priorities of the OPCW should continue to focus on cooperation and assistance, capacity building, and promotion of the role of eco-chemistry for sustainable development.

In this regard, we believe that a balanced approach between the verification requirement and the capacity building reinforcement is essential to the sustainability and the future of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The African Group commends the concluded work of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities, under the Co-Chairs, H.E. Ambassador Sabine Nölke of Canada and H.E. Ambassador Vusi Bruce Koloane of South Africa, and notes that in keeping with its mandate, the final report was submitted to the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group of the Review Conference (OEWG-RC).

The African Group commends the ongoing work being done by the OEWG-RC chaired by H.E. I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja, Ambassador of Indonesia, and pledges its unwavering support for the efforts of this Group, with a view to a successful Fourth Review Conference and look forward to an agreed and consensual outcome of this process.

In conclusion, regarding the ongoing budget and programme facilitation, the Group calls upon all States Parties to demonstrate flexible approaches in order to ensure consensual and positive outcome.

I thank you for your kind attention.

The African Group would like to request that this statement be published as an official document of this session.

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