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**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF AFRICAN STATES PARTIES TO
THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
DELIVERED BY H.E. MR ABDELOUAHAB BELLOUKI AMBASSADOR PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO TO THE OPCW AT THE
FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO
REVIEW THE OPERATION OF THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**

Mr Chairperson, Excellency Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the African States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, I would like to welcome you as Chairperson of the Fourth Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We are confident that, given your vast experience and expertise in the field, you will be able to steer the deliberations of the Fourth Review Conference to a successful conclusion.

I would like to express the Group's appreciation to the Director-General of the OPCW, Mr Fernando Arias, for his comprehensive report. In addition, I would like to welcome him to his first Session of the Conference of States Parties and reiterate our confidence that his consistent efforts will further strengthen the work of our Organisation.

I would also like to express our gratitude to the Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group for the preparation of the Fourth Review Conference, H.E. Ambassador Puja, of Indonesia, for his dedicated efforts in the preparation of the draft report document of the Fourth Review Conference.

The African Group of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the member States of the Non-Aligned Movement and China by H.E. Ambassador Haifa Aissami Madah, the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the OPCW.

The African Group of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention stresses that the prime task of the Fourth Review Conference is to review the operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention since the last Review Conference with the view of upholding the Convention in its entirety and achieving the full, effective, and balanced implementation of all its provisions by all States Parties.



It has been the tradition of the African Group of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to reiterate its position during the regular Conference of the States Parties and Executive Council sessions regarding the most important issues relating to the implementation of the Convention. It is now pertinent that the Fourth Review Conference should as well be informed on the position of the African Group, with some elaboration as follows:

The African Group expresses its appreciation to Iraq, Libya, the Russian Federation, and the Syrian Arab Republic for their significant efforts to destroy all their declared Chemical Weapons Stockpiles. The Group also notes the recent full destruction of all declared chemical weapons production facilities of the Syrian Arab Republic under OPCW Verification. In this regard, the Group encourages the complete destruction of all remaining declared chemical weapons stockpiles, in line with the revised date.

The African Group wishes to reiterate that the universality of the Convention is essential to achieving its object and purpose, as well as international peace and security. It is clear that the objectives of the Convention will not be fully realised as long as there remains even a single State not Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The African Group wishes to stress the importance of the Action Plan on Universality (EC-M-23/DEC.3, dated 24 October 2003) and the subsequent decisions of the Conference of the States Parties to regularly review the results and implementation of it and to take any decision it deems necessary addressing, in particular, the status of those States not Party whose non-adherence is a cause for serious concern and that States that remain outside the Convention shall not be able to take advantage of the benefits it offers to States Parties.

The African Group welcomes the fact that five additional States, namely the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of Angola and the State of Palestine, joined the Convention since the Third Review Conference. Nevertheless, the Group expresses its concern that there are still four States which remain outside the umbrella of the Convention and urges them to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention without delay and preconditions.

The African Group recognises the achievements accomplished since the Third Review Conference under Africa Programme and encourages the Technical Secretariat to continue its efforts to prioritise the strengthening of relevant regional cooperation mechanisms and bodies to further coordinate and ensure synergy at the regional and sub-regional levels with the perspective to enhance effectively the ownership of all capacity building activities implemented in Africa with the OPCW support. In this context, the African Union and its institutions will play an important role.

The Group looks forward to the continuation of this effort under the fifth phase of the Africa Programme, and underlines the necessity to sustain and fund this Programme under regular budget allocation.

The continued implementation of the Programme for Africa by the OPCW remains of vital significance and this conference should at least recognise that fact and give strategic directions to the full engagement of the Organisation in this Programme for the future years with the objective of fully and effectively implementing the Convention by addressing factors

that hinder the development of national capacities of African States Parties and encouraging the progress towards their successful implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The African Group continues to appreciate the efforts of the OPCW Director-General to strengthen cooperation with African States Parties through the Africa Programme. The Africa Programme should further aim at increasing the participation in Programmes and activities that promote the use of chemistry for peaceful purposes, in order to enhance national protective capacities. The importance of the obligations contained in the Convention to promote the peaceful application of chemistry should not be neglected. We encourage the Technical Secretariat to continue developing tailor-made activities covering the following important domains: Domestication of the Convention, Assistance and Protection, the establishment of designated laboratories, the transfer regime of the Convention, and the peaceful use of chemistry.

In this connection, the African Group takes note of the important contribution of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) of the OPCW and encourages all States Parties to actively engage therewith. The African Group also supports the continued exchange of scientific knowledge, equipment and related technologies and appreciates the work so far done by the Technical Secretariat with regard to the capacity-building programmes and activities that continue to promote the safe use and transfer of chemicals for purposes not prohibited by the Convention. The outcome of this Conference should recognize the importance of ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated to the Africa Programme in order to ensure its sustainability and success.

The African Group acknowledges the impact of scientific and technological progress on the effective implementation of the Convention and the importance for the OPCW and its policy-making organs of taking due account of such developments. In this context, we take note of the report of the SAB prepared for the Fourth Review Conference and stress that the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) should continue its role in advising the Director-General.

The implementation of national obligations and measures in accordance with Article VII of the Convention is a cornerstone of the Convention that should be addressed by this august Conference. There is no doubt that full implementation of the Convention contributes to the international and regional peace and security.

The African Group encourages States Parties and the Technical Secretariat to continue providing appropriate assistance and technical support to States Parties in enhancing their national capacities and in carrying out their national implementation measures. In this context, national legislations of States Parties should be consistent with the Convention in order to monitor the relevant chemical activities in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and obligations of the States Parties.

Such effective domestic implementation of the Convention will play a significant role to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons and its use or threat of use by anyone and under any circumstances, in accordance with the Executive Council decision entitled “Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors”.

The implementation of Article X and its provisions relating to assistance and protection against chemical weapons is another important aspect which this Conference should focus on. The African Group encourage all States Parties to fully implement their obligations under Article X and to continue to contribute to the Voluntary Fund for Assistance on a regular basis, so that the OPCW could be in a position to develop a state of readiness to provide timely, adequate and effective assistance and to respond positively to the increasing demands of States Parties for assistance, particularly to the victims of chemical weapons.

In this regard, the African Group recognises the establishment of the Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM) in fulfilling the mandate set out in Article X, urges geographic representation in its implementation, and looks forward to agreed modalities of its deployment.

The Group is convinced that it is of utmost importance that this mechanism and its operational aspects be applied in a manner, which is consistent with the Convention, upon request from a State Party experiencing an emergency and in need of special measures of assistance.

On International Cooperation, the African Group attaches great importance to the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all provisions of Article XI and emphasises the need to speed up efforts in this regard.

We are convinced that the adoption of an action plan for the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI is paramount and cannot be excluded. As recommended by the decision C-16 dated 01 December 2011, we welcome the efforts made by the Technical Secretariat to enhance the implementation of Article XI and we believe that this requires continuous collaboration between the Technical Secretariat and the States Parties as demonstrated by the recent Review and Evaluation Workshops on the Component of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI, held in 2016, 2017, and 2018.

Such exercises should have an important contribution to the identification of the concrete measures related to the effective implementation of this crucial pillar of the Convention in the following main domains: (1) integrated chemical management including chemical safety, security and sustainability, (2) enhancing laboratory capabilities, and (3) promotion of chemical knowledge.

In this regard, the African Group highlights the importance to have designated laboratories in Africa and calls the Technical Secretariat to take the necessary measures to achieve this purpose.

The obligation of the States Parties to cooperate and implement the Convention without hampering economic or technological development and for purposes not prohibited under the Convention cannot be over emphasised. It is imperative to ensure the removal of and to avoid the imposition of any restrictions that are contrary to the letter and spirit of the Convention.

The Group calls on concerned States Parties to fulfill their commitment to transfer technology, material, and equipment for peaceful purposes in the field of chemistry and to remove any discriminatory restrictions, such as unilateral sanctions against other States Parties. The African Group wishes in this regard to reiterate and join the call by NAM that the international cooperation programs of the OPCW should foster economic and

technological development through international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under the Convention, in accordance with the provisions of Article XI, and should, in particular, contribute to the development of States Parties' capacities to implement the Convention.

The African Group notes with satisfaction that the OPCW verification system has been strengthened and become relatively effective in meeting the requirements of the Convention. The African Group is aware about the new development in science and technology in the domain related to the Convention. In this regard, we believe that the adaptation of the verification regime should be in the strict compliance of the Convention and its annexes.

The African Group also calls upon the OPCW to conduct a sufficient number of inspections under Article VI with appropriate geographical coverage and frequency, in accordance with the agreed guidelines, and also to assist National Authorities, upon request, in building up and improving their capacity to fulfil their obligations under the verification regime.

In doing so, it is important that the implementation of the Convention's verification provisions shall continue in a manner that avoids hampering the economic or technological advancement of the States Parties and avoid undue intrusion into the chemical activities of States Parties for purposes not prohibited under the Convention in accordance with the provisions set forth in the Annex on the Protection of Confidential Information.

The African Group of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention further stresses the need for equitable geographic representation and gender balance in the professional ranks of the Organisation, particularly in the senior and management positions and further recalls that the employment of personnel in the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW should be fair and transparent. This is an important aspect for which the Conference should provide guidance and directives. In this regard, the African Group attaches great importance to increasing the presence of Africans at all levels and Divisions of the Organisation.

The African Group encouraged States Parties to continue to discuss modalities for candidates from developing regions to enable them to join the internship and Junior Professional Officer programmes (JPO) of the OPCW. In this regard, we believe that increased sponsorship for internships as well as JPO will augment the pool of potential applicants from the developing world for the Technical Secretariat's professional positions, contributing therefore to the transfer of knowledge and experience. Such initiative will support the national implementation measures and promote peaceful use of chemistry.

The African Group commends the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Future Priorities, whose outcome led to an enrichment of the draft document of this Conference. We take note also of the continuing work of the Open-ended Working Group on Terrorism and the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors. We encourage further consultations and dialogue in accordance with the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention and its technical mandate.

The Group wishes to emphasize, that the destruction of all categories of chemical weapons under strict international verification remains an important objective of the Convention. While the Organisation has mainly focused on this core objective during the past 21 years, we consider that the enhancement of the capabilities of the States Parties should go hand in hand with the other objectives of the Convention. The future of our Treaty will depend on its full

and effective implementation. We should also attempt to maintain a careful balance in resource allocation across all the activities envisioned in the Convention in the most efficient and effective manner possible. The African Group wishes to reiterate that it favours an approach that allows for natural progression and development of the Organisation with regard to its activities and programmes.

Finally, the African Group attaches great importance to the deliberations of the Open-ended Working Group for the preparation of the Review Conference, conducted under the leadership of the distinguished Ambassador of Indonesia HE I Gusti Puja. In this context, the African Group believes that the equilibrium of all recommendations of the Draft Provisional Text is a condition sine qua non to the success of this important Conference, especially in the verification and capacity development issues.

I would like to conclude by emphasising that the African Group of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention are fully committed to their obligations under the Convention, and are looking forward to the complete elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction in the shortest time possible, and also by assuring you of their full cooperation in ensuring the success of this Fourth Review Conference.

The Group expresses its hope that the Conference adopts the final declaration in a spirit of cooperation and consensus.

Thank you.

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