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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 NINETIETH 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 (“the Convention”).

First, I would like to welcome back H.E. Ambassador Jana Reinišová of Czech Republic as Chairperson of the Executive Council (“the Council”), and express the Group’s appreciation for her stellar efforts as Chair during previous sessions. We 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 aligns 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.

The African Group would like to express its gratitude to the Director-General, H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his informative and comprehensive statement delivered at this session. We assure him of our full support and constant cooperation in promoting and strengthening the unity of our Organisation and its role in the disarmament domain.

The Group would like to warmly welcome the appointment of H.E. Ambassador Odette Melono, former Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the OPCW, as Deputy Director-General. We express our total confidence in her professional experience and competence, and assure her of the Group’s full support during her tenure.

The Group salutes the dedication and the professionalism shown by the Technical Secretariat’s (“the Secretariat”) staff in carrying out the OPCW and the Convention objectives.

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 Convention. This is why the African



Group welcomes and strongly supports the decision made by the Conference of the States Parties (“the Conference”), 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 a further three-year period. The Group looks forward to the continuation of a measurable and outcome based Africa Programme under its Fifth Phase.

The African Group continues to appreciate the efforts of the Director-General and the Secretariat 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 Secretariat to continue developing tailor-made activities focusing on regional priorities.

In this context, the Group urges all stakeholders to engage in an inclusive dialogue through the 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.

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.

We believe that the Seventeenth Regional Meeting of National Authorities which will be held in Addis-Ababa in June 2019 constitutes a good opportunity to enrich this Programme, and develop synergy between the Secretariat and the African Union, together with its Regional Economic Communities. In this regard, the review and the full implementation 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 Convention.

In addition, the African Group encourages further engagement of senior officials of the OPCW and of the African Union in order to strengthen cooperation between the two organisations. The participation of such officials at regional high level forums would play a significant role in this regard.

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.

The Group further stresses the need for equitable geographical and gender representation at all levels of the Organisation, particularly in the senior and management cadres and further recalls that the employment of personnel in the Secretariat should be fair and transparent.

We encourage the international community to continue its efforts to ensure the complete and full universality of the Convention and reiterate our long-standing principled position towards

the achievement of complete disarmament in line with the Convention and the policy-making organ's decisions, under strict and effective international control. We call on the States not yet parties to the Convention to accede to it without preconditions or delay.

In light of the recent proposals for amendments of the Annex on Chemicals of the Convention, the Group notes with disappointment the failure to reach consensus on this matter and urges all States Parties to examine such topics in a spirit of consensus for the purpose of the reinforcement of disarmament and the non-proliferation regime of the Convention.

The African Group welcomes the completion of destruction of all chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities declared by the Syrian Arab Republic, and encourages the continuous dialogue between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Secretariat on all pending issues. We look forward to positive outcomes of this cooperation, and urge both parties to continue the implementation of the relevant policy-making organ's 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 for the enhancement of international peace and security.

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.

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 Council's decision. In this regard, the African Group believes that the constant coordination between international organizations 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 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, including technology transfer and technical assistance, is essential to the sustainability and the future of the Convention and will contribute towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In conclusion, the African Group notes with regret the non-adoption of the final report of the Fourth Review Conference owing to a lack of consensus and politicization of some issues. We believe that this collective endeavour by States Parties during the Fourth Review

Conference was not an exercise in futility. Accordingly, the African Group proposes that the Council set up an Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) to identify those outcomes on which consensus is achievable as well as their prioritisation. The OEWG should be urgently established and work in an inclusive and transparent manner, within the framework of the Convention. The recommendations of this OEWG should be submitted to the Council to be adopted by consensus, preferably at its Ninety-Second Session.

Finally, I take this opportunity to announce to the Council that this is the last statement I deliver on behalf of the Africa Group, as my mission in The Hague comes to an end shortly after this Session. It has been a great pleasure and honour for me and my delegation to serve as Coordinator in advancing the interests of the African Group within this Organisation. I would like to also inform the Council that H.E Ambassador Kamal Mohammed Khair, the Permanent Representative of Sudan will henceforth take over the reins. I would like to wish him all the best in his mission and I have no doubt that he will discharge his duties with competence and dedication.

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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