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MOROCCO

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ABDELOUAHAB BELLOUKI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,

I should like to begin by sincerely congratulating Ambassador Krassimir Kostov, the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria, on his election as Chairperson of the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference of the States Parties (“the Conference”). I am convinced that his professional and personal qualities will allow him to lead the deliberations of this session successfully. I would also take this opportunity to address my warm thanks to the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Yun-young Lee of the Republic of Korea, whom I wish every success in his future mission in his friendly country.

I am also pleased to express my deep gratitude to the Director-General of the Organisation, Mr Fernando Arias, for his complete and informative statement, and to the entire staff of the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”), for their dedication and professionalism.

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statements made by the Coordinator of the African Group, Ambassador Kamal Bashir Ahmed, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Sudan, and by Mr Jafar Huseynzada, Acting Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

The Kingdom of Morocco reiterates, once again, its strong condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances, and for whatever reason. Strong and concrete action by the States Parties is essential to further consolidating the role of the Organisation to achieve a world free from chemical weapons.

We welcome the programmes that have been set up for the benefit of African States Parties within the framework of the OPCW Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa (“the Africa Programme”), and my delegation also appreciates the commitment of the Director-General and the International Cooperation and Assistance Division in developing the fifth phase of this Programme. The appointment of an Africa Programme Coordinator is a clear sign of this commitment.



In this connection, Morocco underscores the need to take a large qualitative leap forward in the capacity-building programmes, and emphasises the importance of improving coordination between the Secretariat and the National Authorities of African countries to optimise implementation of the Programme. In this regard, my country would like to express its determination to continue cooperating with the Secretariat to apply the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) in Africa, particularly in the area of prevention and protection against chemical weapons.

Furthermore, Morocco should like to reiterate its gratitude to the countries that have aided and supported this Programme, whose success undeniably depends on more stable and sustainable financing.

In this framework, my country wishes to emphasise the following points, which are necessary for the strengthening of national capacities in Africa:

- consolidation of the legal framework for the management of emergency situations;
- support for coordination between the national institutions concerned and the strengthening of their emergency preparedness capacities, namely response, mitigation, and technical investigations in cases of incidents involving chemicals, including acts of terrorism;
- support of efforts aimed at developing chemical risk preparedness and management activities aimed at strengthening local response and increasing local management autonomy in regard to various incidents;
- strengthening of subregional cooperation through the launch of a joint education and training project;
- the exchange of expertise and the strengthening of laboratories’ capabilities and the offering of training programmes tailor made to the specific needs of countries that request such programmes.

Concerning the fight against the risks of chemical terrorism, it should be highlighted that the use of chemicals as weapons by non-State actors still presents a serious threat. States Parties, especially in Africa, must, with the support of the Secretariat, develop the necessary capacities to counter this threat. My delegation underscores the importance of the establishment of the Rapid Response and Assistance Mission and calls for the organisation, within the framework of the Africa Programme, of activities aimed at strengthening coordination among all stakeholders. In this regard, the following needs should be noted:

- the improvement of chemical detection and prevention capabilities, in particular to combat chemical terrorism and neutralise the *modi operandi* of non-State actors;
- the development of appropriate training in decontamination, mobile reconnaissance, sampling, and chemical analysis.

In this context, my delegation wishes to underscore the importance of the work carried out within the framework of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, chaired by Ambassador Ngofa of Nigeria, and by the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors, chaired by Ambassador Infante of Chile.

Within the framework of active South-South cooperation, the National Authorities of Morocco and Togo completed, in March 2019, the second visit under the Mentorship/Partnership Programme, initiated in October 2018, with the invaluable support of the Secretariat. My delegation would take this opportunity to recall that it is prepared to cooperate fully with the African States Parties within the framework of a mutual capacity-building programme.

In addition, Morocco is aware of the importance of the exchange of experience in the area of chemical safety and security in view of optimal implementation of the Convention, and for this reason hosted, in Casablanca from 12 to 14 November 2019, a forum aimed at creating a platform for the exchange of best practices in the area of integrated chemicals management. Participants discussed the relevance of the training modules related to chemical security management and, in this regard, were able to attest to the Moroccan experience in this area during the visit to the industrial facilities of Morocco's phosphate industry leader.

In reference to the outcomes of the Fourth Review Conference, my delegation welcomes the consensus around the creation of a mechanism aimed at revitalising the existing facilitation work within the OPCW. My delegation supports the compromise proposal put forth by the Chairperson of the Executive Council, Ambassador Andrea Perugini of Italy, and the co-facilitators, Ambassadors Agustín Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador and I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja of Indonesia. My delegation hopes that this initiative will allow for the adoption of a common vision that will strengthen the implementation of the Convention and preserve the unity of the Organisation.

In conclusion, my country calls on States Parties to uphold the principles of dialogue and consensus in order to allow the Organisation to work towards realising the common objectives of the Convention, which plays a fundamental role in safeguarding international peace and security.

I thank you for your kind attention.

I would ask that this statement be considered as an official document of this session of the Conference.

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