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**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP
OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LAWRENCE LENAYAPA
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA TO THE
OPCW AT THE NINETY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

At the outset, on behalf of the African Group, I would like to welcome back H.E. Mr Agustín Vásquez Gómez, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of El Salvador, as Chairperson of the Ninety-Fifth Session of the Executive Council (“the Council”). We are confident that you will be able to steer the deliberations of this session to a successful conclusion.

I would like to extend our appreciation to the Director-General of the OPCW, H.E. Mr Fernando Arias, for his comprehensive report and reiterate our confidence in his efforts to further strengthen the work of our Organisation. The Group also appreciates the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their valuable role in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”).

The Group notes that this session of the Council is taking place under extraordinary circumstances and reiterate our expression of sympathy and solidarity with the international community over the ongoing outbreak of COVID-19. The Group encourages strict adherence to preventative measures that have been put in place by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Host Country, and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW. We appreciate also, the COVID-19 Task Force of the OPCW, and the entire staff of the Organisation, for their efforts, innovativeness, and adaptability, towards ensuring that the work of the Organisation continues, even in difficult times.

The African Group notes the measures put in place for the organisation of this session, and wish to reiterate that they are necessary only in light of the ongoing pandemic. We hope that meetings in regular formats can be convened as soon as the health situation allows.

The African Group commends the progress achieved under the four previous phases of the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa. We look forward to attaining further accomplishments under the fifth phase of this Programme, which commenced on 1 January 2020, as reported in the Director-General’s Note EC-95/DG.11, dated



10 September 2020. In this regard, the African Group welcomes the inaugural meeting of the Steering Committee, in its newly constituted format, held online on 26 June 2020. To guarantee the sustainability of this Programme, the Group underlines the importance of funding it under the regular budget of the OPCW. The African Group is ready to engage in discussions with the Technical Secretariat and all regional groups on this matter.

We call on the Technical Secretariat to continue developing tailor-made programmes focusing on regional and subregional priorities, including development of laboratory capacities and centres of excellence. We recall the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the OPCW and the African Union. In this respect, we encourage further and regular engagement between senior officials of the OPCW and the African Union in order to strengthen cooperation between the two organisations in the implementation of the Convention. The participation of such officials at regional high-level forums will play a significant role in this respect.

The Group appreciates the efforts of the Technical Secretariat to maintain its capacity-building activities despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, we appreciate the regional meeting of the African National Authorities held virtually on 4 August 2020, which focused amongst other issues on the implementation of the fifth phase of the Africa Programme. The Group welcomes the efforts of the OPCW to adapt its programmes and values online format alternatives put forward to maintain capacity-building activities in Africa.

The African Group appreciates the efforts of the Technical Secretariat, States Parties, and others who have contributed towards the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology. We remain confident that this new initiative will play a significant role in capacity building in the area of research and training, especially for the African States Parties. The Group believes that this project will promote knowledge sharing and provide additional training opportunities for States Parties. We encourage States Parties that are in a position to do so, to make voluntary contributions to this project.

We encourage the OPCW and the international community to continue efforts towards ensuring the complete and full universality of the Convention. We call on the States not yet parties to the Convention to accede to it at the earliest opportunity and without preconditions or delay. In addition, we reiterate our long-standing principled position towards the achievement of complete disarmament in line with the Convention and the decisions of the policy-making organs (PMO), under strict and effective international control.

The African Group encourages the only remaining possessor State Party to continue accelerating the destruction of its stockpiles in accordance with the Convention and decisions of the PMO. On the issue of Abandoned Chemical Weapons, we encourage China, Japan, and the Technical Secretariat to continue working in concert to complete the destruction process in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and the relevant PMO decisions.

The African Group reiterates its strongly held position against the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances. We note, the ongoing work of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) in the Syrian Arab Republic, and encourage continuous constructive dialogue and cooperation between both parties on all outstanding issues.

The African Group commends the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) and welcomes the nomination of H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Philemon Madonsela of the Republic of South Africa as its new Chairperson, and assure him of the Group's unwavering support. We commend also the work of the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors chaired by H.E. Ambassador Maria Teresa Infante of Chile, and look forward to the continuous facilitation of discussions, to promote global chemical security in light of Council decision EC-86/DEC.9. In this regard, the African Group believes strongly 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 as well as 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 achievement of the objectives of the Convention, guarantees its sustainability and future, as well as contributes towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Regarding the draft decision on the rules of procedures for Advisory Body on Administrative and Financial Matters (ABAF), the African Group encourages States Parties to engage in an open and inclusive manner and strive for consensus in the adoption of any changes.

The African Group welcomes the resumption of consultations by the co-facilitators on organisational governance issues with a view to achieving common ground on actionable proposals. Regarding the need for flexibility in the tenure policy to ensure knowledge management and talent retention in the Secretariat, we look forward to discussing proposals regarding specific areas of expertise requiring such flexibility. Such proposals should remain cognisant of the fact that the OPCW is a non-career organisation.

Additionally, the African Group welcomes efforts by the Director-General at achieving gender balance at the top management levels of the Organisation, and call for emplacement of measures to entrench and sustain this practice. Similarly, the Group calls on the Director-General to adopt measures towards achieving equitable geographic and gender balance at all levels of the Organisation's workforce. This will not only be consistent with Article VIII, paragraph 44 of the Convention, but will also afford the OPCW the broad benefits associated with a diverse, skilled workforce.

Mr Chairperson, in conclusion, the African Group reiterates its strongly held belief in the merits of the OPCW being a technical Organisation. We encourage all Member States and stakeholders to work in close collaboration towards full implementation of the Convention and preserve the Organisation's technical nature for the enhancement of international peace and security.

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.