



## **Introductory Remarks by the Director-General, Fernando Arias, at the Second Meeting of the OPCW Africa Programme Steering Committee**

**As delivered on 16 November 2020, The Hague, Netherlands**

Mr Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Dear colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to address the second meeting of the Steering Committee of the Africa Programme. I wish to join the chairperson, Ambassador of Sudan Kamal Bashir, in extending a warm welcome to all Committee members and observers.

It is a great satisfaction to see the Committee provide a dedicated forum of dialogue and coordination with the major stakeholders of our cooperation with Africa. I pledge the Secretariat's continued commitment and support to the work of this value-adding body.

Mr Chairperson,

Since the last Committee meeting on June 26th, the Secretariat has continued to deploy its best efforts to achieve progress in the implementation of the 5th Phase of the Africa programme, despite the continued restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the area of capacity-building, which is the backbone of the programme, the Secretariat has intensified the delivery of online training activities. As a result, since the last meeting, the Africa Programme provided 11 online capacity building activities which accommodated participants from 40 African States Parties. Training areas ranged from enhancing the effectiveness of National Authorities, to improving control over cross-border transfers of scheduled chemicals, developing assistance and protection capabilities against chemical threats and incidents, educating on chemical safety and security management, and upgrading laboratory competencies across the continent.

Other courses are scheduled for the rest of the year. In total, the Secretariat intends to deliver 22 targeted regional and global capacity-building activities benefiting Africa in 2020.

Furthermore, the Secretariat continued to promote knowledge of chemistry, and to facilitate the exchange of technical and scientific information in peaceful applications of chemistry on the continent. It is in this context that the Organisation sponsored the participation of 90 African scientists to two international chemistry-related conferences, held online, in Italy and Mauritius, in July and August, respectively. It also sponsored four fellowships of African scientists in Europe, as well as two transfers of laboratory equipment from Germany to Sudan and Tanzania, respectively.

Under the Research Project Support Programme, the OPCW also funded four African projects this year. Eight additional African Projects were approved earlier this month for co-funding with the International Foundation for Science.

As planned under the 5th Phase, the Secretariat continued to improve the visibility of the Africa Programme with a view to gaining more support and stakeholder engagement. The OPCW Africa Network continues to be developed and maintained. Counting now over 500 members among African chemistry professionals, the Network constitutes a reliable platform for information and interaction on CWC-related matters.

In addition to the Network, the Secretariat has recently issued the first OPCW Africa Bulletin. Disseminated among States Parties and Programme stakeholders, the bulletin offers a closer look into the Programme's recent developments, and shares insights into the impact it generates.

Mr Chairperson,

The Africa Programme continues to be essentially funded through the OPCW regular budget. In order to further enhance its effectiveness, the Secretariat has also been seeking voluntary contributions. To that end, the Secretariat announced on 1 July eight proposals of special projects for extra-budgetary funding under the programme. We continue to seek necessary support for these projects. I wish to take this opportunity to encourage African States Parties to join the Secretariat's efforts to identify sources of funding for these valuable projects.

In the meantime, other activities under the Programme received voluntary contributions from States Parties. On 19 August, the United Kingdom made a contribution of 800,000 British Pounds to diverse OPCW projects, including 100,000 British pounds to the Trust Fund for the Implementation of Article X. This contribution goes towards further strengthening mitigation and preparedness to respond to chemical incidents in States Parties that are members of the East African Community, the Economic Community of West African States, and the Southern African Development Community Regions. The British voluntary contribution also includes 250,000 British pounds assigned to the Trust Fund for Training to assess and enhance the capacity of analytical laboratories, including in African Member States.

Germany has once again generously funded the annual "Wuppertal Course on Explosion Protection and Error Management". The course which was delivered online in September accommodated 11 African participants.

The Czech Republic has been providing in-kind support to the programme by co-facilitating, through the Czech "Population Protection Institute", two specialised assistance and protection courses for the benefit of Member States in the East African Community.

I wish to acknowledge, with high appreciation, the generous support provided by all donors.

In addition to the aforementioned developments, the past period allowed the Secretariat to finalise the impact assessment of the capacity-building activities delivered for African participants in 2019. The results confirmed the effectiveness of the Programme. It also

provided unique insights on the extent and nature of the efforts made by African Alumni, to follow up on their participation in the OPCW capacity building events.

More details regarding these developments will be presented to the Committee by the Secretariat during this meeting.

Mr Chairperson,

I wish to take this opportunity to refer to the ChemTech Centre Project. Steady progress has been made. At the moment the final design is complete and we are in the process to select the construction company. We expect to have selected the company in January. After preparing the logistics, we plan to start the construction in the summer of 2021.

To date, financial contributions and pledges totalling EUR 33.3 million have been received from 45 countries, the European Union, and three other donors. A further EUR 200.000 is needed to fully fund the project. I renew my appeal to African States Parties that have not contributed yet, to invest in the future of this Organisation by supporting the ChemTech Centre project with voluntary contributions. I would be grateful to the Steering Committee Members if they could relay this call to their respective governments and to the other Members of the African Group.

Once established, the Centre will benefit to a great extent to African chemistry professionals. It will put at our disposal a fantastic tool that will allow us to expand the activities related to international cooperation, including under the Africa Programme.

I should like to reiterate the Secretariat's unwavering commitment and dedication to supporting the African States Parties, and to addressing, through the Africa Programme, their needs and priorities in the context of the Convention.

I wish you every success in this meeting, and I look forward to our continued collaboration and mutual support.

I thank you.

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