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SOUTH AFRICA

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Chairperson, Your Excellency, Mr Agustín Vásquez Gómez, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of El Salvador,
Director-General Fernando Arias,
Senior members of the Technical Secretariat,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates

On behalf of the South African delegation, I join other speakers in welcoming you back as Chairperson of the Ninety-Fifth Session of the Council. We remain assured of your professionalism and experience, and trust that your guidance will steer this session towards attaining its objectives and a successful outcome. In this regard, let me assure you of my delegation's full support and active collaboration.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Lawrence Lenayapa of the Republic of Kenya, on behalf of the African Group, as well as the statement delivered by H.E. Mr Fikrat Akhundov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China.

Once again, we meet under extraordinary circumstances posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has intensified the pre-existing social and economic challenges faced by our countries, with many now placed under the spectre of the second wave of the deadly epidemic. We remain of the belief that collective international action is the best approach in fighting this pandemic.

I would like to thank the Director-General, H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias, for the comprehensive report. We also wish to thank the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat for their commitment and efforts towards ensuring the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention") and the attainment of the mandate of the Organisation to ensure the destruction of all chemical weapons, and eliminating their threat to international peace and security. We welcome further progress achieved in this regard.

I am singularly honoured to be nominated as Chair of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism. I look forward to the continuous discussions and engagements with other international organisations and stakeholders in the global effort to combat the use of chemical weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In this regard, as South Africa, we reiterate our position that we oppose the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any



circumstances, and are fully committed to our international obligations as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We echo the call to all States that are not yet Party to the Convention to join as soon as possible to ensure collective responsibility for creating a safe world; one free of chemical weapons, which upholds the international norm against the production, use, and stockpiling of chemical weapons established under the Convention.

My delegation commends the progress achieved under the fourth phase of the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa and takes notes of the first Steering Committee meeting that took place in June 2020. We anticipate realising tangible and measurable progress under the fifth phase of this Programme. Given its importance, we stand firm in our belief that the Programme should be funded through the regular budget of the Organisation to ensure its sustainability.

South Africa notes with interest the reports from the facilitators of Articles VI, VII, X, and XI. We place importance on the full implementation of Article XI and its provisions in order to strengthen and accelerate the economic and technological development of States Parties in the developing world, especially after the palpable devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. We encourage appropriate, tailor-made assistance and technical support to States Parties to enable them to enhance their national capacities and capabilities in carrying out their national implementation measures.

South Africa welcomes the report regarding the status of the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre), which will support capacity-building efforts in the States Parties, as well as strengthen the capabilities of the OPCW in responding to the threat of chemical weapons.

We welcome the positive developments that have taken place in the past with respect to improving the gender balance at the higher level within the Organisation, and urge that there be equitable geographic distribution of staff in all levels of the Organisation.

We echo the call that all States Parties should endeavour towards the achievement of consensus in the work of the OPCW. We believe that dialogue and collaboration among all States Parties remain the best mechanism that will assist in the attainment of the aspiration of this Organisation and its Convention.

In conclusion, in reiterating South Africa's commitment to peace, based on the values and the principles espoused by our late President, Nelson Mandela, during this Decade of Peace being marked in honour of his memory, I wish to quote from his inaugural speech in 1994: "We commit ourselves to the construction of a complete, just, and lasting peace". Those words resonate to this day as the collective work that we do in this Organisation is aimed at contributing to the attainment of the long-term goal of the pursuit of international peace and security, development, and human rights.

Multilateralism and the rule of international law remain the cornerstone of our foreign policy. South Africa will therefore continue to play an active role in all aspects of disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control, while actively promoting and supporting the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In closing, we would like to request that this statement be regarded as an official statement of this session.