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NIGERIA

**STATEMENT BY MR OTAIGBE MICHAEL IRUSOTA COUNSELLOR
PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA
TO THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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

At the outset, I would like to recognise the extraordinary situation under which this session of the Council is convened, and express the sympathies of my Government to the international community over the loss of human lives due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We strongly believe that a situation of this magnitude is best tackled when the international community works cooperatively and, therefore, call on all stakeholders to work in such a manner to defeat the pandemic.

I wish to welcome back Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador as Chairperson of the Executive Council (“the Council”) and reaffirm the full confidence of my delegation in his competencies. I also appreciate the Director-General, H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his very informative statement delivered at this session and express the full support of my delegation to him and the staff of the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”), as they carry on their important work.

The Nigerian delegation aligns itself with the statement of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China, which was delivered by H.E. Ambassador Fikrat Akhundov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Nigerian delegation also aligns itself with the statement of the African Group, which was delivered by H.E. Ambassador Lawrence Lenayapa, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya.

Nigeria considers the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) generally, and chemical weapons specifically, under any circumstances, as unacceptable. In that regard, the full and verifiable destruction of all chemical weapons stockpiles, including old and abandoned chemical weapons, remains a top priority for Nigeria. We note the various reports of the Director-General and national papers by concerned States, detailing the progress made on destruction-related issues and commend them for their considerable efforts. We further encourage them to expedite destruction in line with the Convention and relevant decisions of the policy-making organs (PMOs).



My delegation notes also, national papers by the Syrian Arab Republic and reports of the Director-General, related to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. We urge continued cooperation between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Secretariat, including the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), to clarify all outstanding issues related to the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic, and suspected incidents of use of chemicals as weapons within the country.

On universality, Nigeria takes note of the Annual Report of the Director General EC-95/DG.20, dated 25 September 2020, and joins the call on all remaining States not Party to the Convention to ratify or accede to it without preconditions or delay. We encourage States Parties to utilise their bilateral influence to persuade these States not Party to join the Convention.

The report of the Director General EC-95/DG.11 dated 10 September 2020, on the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa (“Africa Programme”), outlined the adjustments made by the Secretariat in implementation of the fifth phase of this Programme, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. My delegation commends the Secretariat for its innovativeness, and expresses the hope that in-person training courses and capacity-building activities will be resumed as soon as conditions allow. We commend States Parties who have made a voluntary contribution to the Programme and look forward to its robust implementation, with tangible, measurable outcomes.

A draft decision on the 2021 Programme and Budget is before the Council for recommendation to the Conference of the States Parties. We commend the co-facilitators, Mr Marcin Kawalowski of Poland and Mr Matteo Fachinotti of Switzerland, for their work in advancing discussions among States Parties. We encourage delegations to negotiate in good faith to ensure that the Organisation has a budget that enables it to fulfil its core objectives.

My delegation pays tribute to the facilitators of Articles VII, X, and XI for their work in advancing full implementation of the Convention. We welcome the resumption of consultations by the co-facilitators on organisational governance issues, Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre of Uruguay and Ambassador Matthew Neuhaus of Australia, and look forward to further robust engagements under their guidance. On the issue of Workforce Management, we wish to emphasise that the OPCW is a non-career organisation and discussions within this facilitation must remain cognizant of that fact.

My delegation expresses appreciation to States Parties and the Secretariat for the support given to H.E. Ambassador Oji Nyimenuate Ngofa, Permanent Representative of Nigeria, during his term as Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism. We welcome the nomination of H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Philemon Madonsela of South Africa as Chairperson, and commend him for convening his first facilitation. We look forward to sharing experiences on strategies to prevent, investigate, and punish chemical terrorism under his stewardship.

We call on all States Parties to consider nominations of members of the Advisory Body on Administrative and Financial Matters (ABAF) into a consensual manner. Regarding the draft decisions for the amendment of the rules of procedure of the ABAF, and proposed amendments to that draft decision, my delegation wishes to reiterate our call on all States Parties to engage in constructive dialogue and consultations in order to arrive at a consensual and inclusive decision that strengthens the ABAF in its independent, advisory role. On the draft decision

sponsored by a group of States Parties proposing that the Council recommend that the aerosolised use of central nervous system (CNS)-acting chemicals is inconsistent with law enforcement purposes, we encourage the co-sponsors and States with contrary views to engage in frank and open discussions, so that a consensual decision can be reached, consistent with the object and purpose of the Convention.

In closing, Mr Chairperson, Nigeria notes, with concern, the report of the Federal Republic of Germany, on the alleged use of a nerve agent against an individual. We welcome the invitation extended to the Technical Secretariat for technical assistance in the investigation of this incident and encourage strict compliance with the Convention in this process.

I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the external server of the OPCW.

Thank you for your attention.

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