

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF AFRICAN STATES PARTIES TO
THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION DELIVERED BY THE COORDINATOR
OF THE GROUP, H.E. MR. LAWRENCE LENAYAPA, AMBASSADOR AND
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA TO THE
ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS (OPCW)**

**NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(THE HAGUE, 9-12 MARCH 2021)**

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

- 1) At the outset, on behalf of the Group of African States Parties (“the African Group/the Group”) to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”), I would like to welcome back H.E. Mr Agustin Vasquez Gomes, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of El Salvador, as Chairperson of the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Executive Council (“the Council”). We are confident that you will steer the deliberations of this session to a successful conclusion. The Group wishes to thank the Chairperson and the Bureau for their tireless and fruitful engagement towards the success of the work of the Council during their term.
- 2) I would like to extend our appreciation to the Director-General of the OPCW, H.E. Mr Fernando Arias, for his comprehensive statement and reiterate our confidence in his efforts to further strengthen the work of our Organisation. The African Group also appreciates the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their valuable role in facilitating the implementation of the Convention.
- 3) The African Group associates itself with the statement of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Convention and China, delivered by H.E. Ambassador Fikrat Akhundov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan.
- 4) The Group acknowledges the negative impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and reiterates its solidarity with the international community. We note the measures put in place by the OPCW and all States Parties, in light of the recommendations of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, to ensure continuity in the work of the Council. We express appreciation to the management, staff and COVID-19 task force of the Organisation for their efforts, innovativeness, and adaptability in this regard. The Group looks forward to the resumption of the Organisation’s meetings in regular format as soon as the public health situation allows, and hopes for a speedy return to full participation of States Parties in the work of the OPCW, as well as the resumption and reinforcement of regular international cooperation and assistance activities, including upgrading critical infrastructure and research in chemistry for peaceful purposes.
- 5) The African Group expresses its view that only a global access to vaccines will ensure speedy resumption of OPCW activities as well as the defeat of this pandemic. In this regard, the Group calls on the States Parties and the international community as a whole to ensure access by developing countries to COVID-19 vaccines and to narrow the technology gap between developed and developing regions of the world.

Mr Chairperson,

- 6) The African Group welcomes the efforts put into the implementation of the Fifth Phase of the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa, which commenced on 1 January 2020. The Group reiterates the importance of funding future Phases of this Programme under the regular budget of the OPCW to ensure its sustainability. The African Group remains open to discussion with the Technical Secretariat and all regional groups on this matter.
- 7) We call on the Technical Secretariat to continue developing tailor-made programmes focusing on regional and sub-regional priorities, including the development of laboratory capacities and centres of excellence. We recall the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the OPCW and the African Union, in respect of which we encourage further and regular engagement between senior officials of the two Organisations in order to strengthen cooperation between them towards the implementation of the Convention. The participation of such officials at regional high-level forums will play a significant role in this respect.
- 8) The African Group appreciates the efforts of the Technical Secretariat in maintaining its capacity-building activities to enhance cooperation with Africa despite the challenges posed by the pandemic including by adapting these programmes to online format alternatives.
- 9) The African Group appreciates the efforts of the Technical Secretariat, States Parties, and others role players who have contributed towards building of the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology, and encourages States Parties to continue making financial contribution to the Centre and its work. We are hopeful that the target for the completion of the Centre will be met. We remain confident that the Centre will play a significant role in promoting international cooperation and assistance, and advancing the Organisation's efforts towards capacity building in the areas of amongst others, research and data analytics, forensic and laboratory work, training and knowledge sharing, especially for African States Parties. In this regard we look forward to the completion and implementation of the project's programme of the Centre for the benefit of all States Parties.
- 10) The African Group, cognisant of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, encourages the United States of America to continue implementing its plan for the destruction of its stockpiles in accordance with the Convention and decisions of the PMOs. Similarly, the Group encourages China, Japan, and the Technical Secretariat to continue working in concert to complete the destruction process of Abandoned Chemical Weapons in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and the relevant PMOs decisions.

Mr Chairperson;

- 11) 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 Technical Secretariat in the Syrian Arab Republic and encourage continuous constructive dialogue and cooperation between both parties on all outstanding issues.
- 12) The African Group commends the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) chaired by H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Philemon Madonsela of the Republic of South Africa and the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors. We 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 strongly believes that the constant coordination between international organisations and relevant stakeholders is crucial in building awareness on 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.
- 13) Whilst aware of the threat of the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons and chemical terrorism as some of the main challenges for the Organisation, the African Group advocates that,

as an integral part of its response, 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, are 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.

Mr Chairperson,

- 14) Regarding the draft Decision on Understanding regarding the Aerosolised Use of Central Nervous System Acting Chemicals (CNSAC) for Law Enforcement Purposes the African Group calls upon the States Parties to engage in broad and inclusive consultations in order to present an agreeable proposal to the PMOs.
- 15) 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.
- 16) 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 the emplacement of measures to entrench and sustain this practice. We note the revised sourcing strategy of the OPCW, aimed at achieving equitable geographic and gender balance at all levels of the Organisation's workforce, and look forward to its effective implementation. This would afford the Organisation the broad benefits of a diverse, skilled workforce, consistent with Article VIII, Paragraph 44.
- 17) Mr Chairperson, in conclusion, the African Group reiterates its strongly held belief in the merits of the OPCW being a Technical Organisation and calls on all States Parties to revert to the culture of adopting Decisions that are core to the objectives of the Convention by consensus. This will ensure the effective implementation of the OPCW's mandate. The Group encourages 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 on the OPCW public website and external server as an official document of this session.