



STATEMENT BY MR OTAIGBE MICHAEL IRUSOTA, COUNSELLOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA AT THE NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, 9 – 12 MARCH 2021

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

I wish to welcome back H.E. Ambassador Agustin Vasquez Gomez 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 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, especially in these difficult times as occasioned by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, I wish to express the sympathies of my Government to the international community over the loss of human lives and call on the international community to work cooperatively to defeat the pandemic.

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.

The full and verifiable destruction of all chemical weapons stockpiles, including old and abandoned chemical weapons, remains a cornerstone of the Convention and a priority for Nigeria. We note the various reports of the Director-General and national papers

by concerned states, detailing the progress achieved on destruction-related issues. We commend them for their considerable efforts and encourage the continuation of destruction of stockpiles within agreed timelines.

My delegation notes also, the national papers by the Syrian Arab Republic and the 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 Declarations Assessment Team (DAT) and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), to clarify all outstanding issues related to the initial declaration of Syrian Arab Republic, and suspected incidents of use of chemicals as weapons within the country.

Nigeria takes note of the report of the Director-General on Article VI submission by states parties and expresses appreciation to the Technical Secretariat for their assistance towards states parties that are unable to submit declarations timeously. We encourage the Secretariat to continue to provide support for states parties in the use of its secure electronic tools to ensure accurate and timely submissions by the states parties.

My delegation commends the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T), under the able guidance of Ambassador Vusimuzi Philemon Madonsela of South Africa, where useful ideas on prevention, investigation, and prosecution of incidents of chemical terrorism have been shared. We underscore the importance of international cooperation and assistance activities in the prevention of global chemical terrorism and encourage the States Parties and the Secretariat to allocate adequate budgetary provisions in this regard.

Nigeria commends the Director-General for his efforts towards the funding and construction of the proposed OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology. My delegation believes that this centre, when completed, will contribute to an increase in capacity-building activities for States Parties, and chemical knowledge retention for the Organisation. We warmly commend the States Parties, institutions, and the individual who have made voluntary contributions towards this project and look forward to its timely completion.

We express appreciation to the co-facilitators on organisational governance issues, Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre of Uruguay, and Ambassador Matthew Neuhaus of Australia, for facilitating useful deliberations regarding the workforce of the Organisation during the intersessional period. We look forward to continuing robust engagements under their guidance.

Regarding the draft decisions for the amendment of the rules of procedure of the Advisory Body on Administrative and Financial Matters (ABAF), and proposed amendments to that draft decision, Nigeria wishes to reiterate its call on all States

Parties to engage in constructive dialogue and consultations to arrive at a consensual and inclusive decision that strengthens the ABAF in its independent, advisory role.

On the draft decision proposing that the Council recommend that the aerosolised use of central nervous system (CNS)-acting chemicals is inconsistent with law enforcement purposes, Nigeria wishes to express its support for that decision as it is in line with the advice of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) on use of these chemicals for riot-control purposes. We, however, observe that there are different views among some States Parties on this very technical issue, thus, we encourage frank and open discussions so that a consensual decision can be reached, consistent with the object and purpose of the Convention.

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.