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**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP
OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LAWRENCE LENAYAPA
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

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

On behalf of the African Group of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”), I would like to welcome H.E. Ambassador José Antonio Zabalgoitia Trejo, Permanent Representative of the United Mexican States, as Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention (hereinafter “the Conference”). We are confident that, given your vast experience and expertise in the field, you will be able to steer the deliberations of this session to a successful conclusion.

Allow me to express the Group’s appreciation to the Chairperson of the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference of State Parties, H.E. Mr Krassimir Kostov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria, for all his dedicated efforts during that session and in the preparation for this session. The Group wishes him all the best in his future endeavours.

I would like also, 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 Group also appreciates the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their valuable role in the implementation of the Convention.

The African Group of States Parties to the Convention associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Convention and China by H.E. Ambassador Fikrat Akhundov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The African Group expresses its solidarity with the international community during these extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and notes the measures put in place for the Organisation of this session of the Conference of the States Parties. The Group reiterates that the measures are necessary only in light of the ongoing pandemic and look forward to meeting in regular format as soon as the public health situation allows. We appreciate



the COVID-19 Task Force of the OPCW, and the entire staff of the Organisation, for their efforts, innovation, and adaptability, towards ensuring that the work of the Organisation continues, even in these difficult times.

As a matter of principle, the Group reiterates its position on issues that are pertinent to the object and purpose of the Convention, mainly universality of the Convention, international cooperation and assistance, as well as capacity building, the financial sustenance of the Africa Programme, the Twinning Programme for laboratories, the threat of chemical terrorism, the promotion of peaceful use of chemistry for development, and ensuring the diversity of the Organisation's workforce.

In respect to the universalisation of the Treaty and also towards a world free of weapons of mass destruction, the African Group urges the States not Party to the Convention to join without delay or preconditions. We believe that the universality of the Convention is essential in achieving its object and purpose, as well as attaining international peace and security.

On international cooperation, the African Group attaches great importance to the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all provisions of Article XI and emphasises the need to speed up efforts in this regard. The Group appreciates the efforts of the Technical Secretariat to maintain its capacity-building activities despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are convinced that the measures put in place for the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI are of paramount importance for the reinforcement of capacity building of all States Parties. As recommended by decision C-16/DEC.10, dated 1 December 2011, we welcome the efforts made by the Technical Secretariat to enhance the implementation of Article XI, and we believe that this requires continuous collaboration between the Technical Secretariat and the States Parties, as demonstrated by the recent Review and Evaluation Workshops on the Component of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI held in the last five years.

Such exercise should make an important contribution to the identification of the concrete measures related to the effective implementation of this crucial pillar of the Convention in the following main domains: (a) integrated chemical management including chemical safety, security, and sustainability; (b) enhancing laboratory capabilities; and (c) promotion of chemical knowledge.

The Group calls on States Parties to fulfil their commitment to transfer technology, material, and equipment for peaceful purposes in the field of chemistry and to remove any discriminatory restrictions, such as unilateral sanctions against other States Parties. The African Group wishes in this regard to reiterate that the international cooperation programmes of the OPCW should foster economic and technological development through international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under the Convention, in accordance with the provisions of Article XI, and should, in particular, contribute to the development of States Parties' capacities to implement the Convention.

In addition, the full implementation of the provisions of Article X is essential for the protection against threats of chemical weapons. The African Group encourages all States Parties to fully implement their obligations under Article X and to continue to contribute to the Voluntary Fund for Assistance on a regular basis, so that the OPCW could be in a position to develop a state of readiness to provide timely, adequate, and effective assistance and to respond positively to the increasing demands of States Parties for assistance, particularly to the victims of chemical weapons.

The African Group notes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of International Cooperation and Assistance (ICA) programmatic activities during 2020. We welcome the establishment of a COVID-19 Variability Impact Fund in the 2020 Programme and Budget, which will ensure the preservation of funds for the resumption of normal ICA activities when the health situation allows. We note also, the reduction of the ICA budget in the 2020 Programme and Budget and wish to highlight that this is accepted by the Group, only with the understanding that it is an exceptional measure and not meant to be a precedent for future budgeting for the ICA.

The African Group has taken note of the Note by the Director General (C-25/DG.3, dated 19 June 2020) which outlines the transfer of funds during 2019. We express concern that considerable amounts of EUR 1,325,950 have been transferred from the ICA Programme over the last five years. The African Group wishes to emphasise that the ICA is one of the most important objectives of the Convention, and this should be reflected in its funding and the implementation of its programmes. Whilst the Group understands that late receipt of assessed contributions might lead to non-utilisation of portions of the ICA budget within the year, all effort should be made to preserve funds earmarked for ICA activities into another budget year, through retained surplus funds, and the establishment of an ICA fund, similar to the COVID-19 Variability Impact Fund, could be considered.

Regarding the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Group commends the progress achieved under the four previous phases of the Programme and looks forward to further accomplishments under the fifth phase of this Programme which commenced on 1 January 2020. In this regard, the African Group welcomes the two meetings of the Programme's Steering Committee held in its newly constituted format, on 26 June 2020 and 16 November 2020, as well as the regional meeting of the African National Authorities held virtually on 4 August 2020, which focused, amongst other issues, on the implementation of the fifth phase of the Africa Programme.

The implementation of the Programme will be a step forward towards providing the Continent with the necessary means to fulfil its commitments under the Convention. In this respect, the Group believes that it is essential to sustain and fund all aspects of this Programme under regular budget allocation and is ready to engage in discussions with the Technical Secretariat and all regional groups on this matter.

The African Group continues to appreciate the efforts of the OPCW Director-General to strengthen cooperation with African States Parties and encourages further and regular engagement between senior officials of the OPCW and the African Union in order to strengthen cooperation between the two organisations on the implementation of the Convention. We encourage the Technical Secretariat to continue developing tailor-made programmes focusing on regional and sub-regional priorities, covering the following important domains: domestication of the Convention; Assistance and Protection; the promotion of twinning programmes for laboratories; the establishment of designated laboratories; the transfer regime of the Convention; and the peaceful uses of chemistry.

The African Group encourages the Technical Secretariat to continue its efforts to prioritise the strengthening of relevant regional cooperation mechanisms and bodies to further coordinate and ensure synergy at the regional and subregional levels, with the perspective to effectively enhance the ownership of all capacity-building activities being implemented in Africa with the support of the OPCW. In this context, the African Union and its institutions are expected to play an important role.

The implementation of national obligations and measures in accordance with Article VII of the Convention is a cornerstone of the Convention that should continue to be addressed by this august Conference. There is no doubt that full implementation of the Convention contributes to international and regional peace and security.

The African Group encourages States Parties and the Technical Secretariat to continue providing appropriate assistance and technical support to States Parties in enhancing their national capacities and in carrying out their national implementation measures. In this context, national legislations of States Parties should be consistent with the Convention in order to monitor the relevant chemical activities in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and obligations of the States Parties.

Such effective domestic implementation of the Convention will play a significant role to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons, under any circumstances and their use or threat thereof, by anyone, in accordance with the Executive Council decision entitled “Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors”.

In this context, the African Group commends the work done by the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism chaired by H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Philemon Madonsela of South Africa and the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors. Also, the Group believes that the constant coordination between international organisations and relevant stakeholders is crucial in building awareness of 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.

The African Group notes with serious concern the low percentage of staff from African States Parties in the OPCW, which deprives the Organisation of the benefits of a diverse workforce. In this regard, the African Group attaches great importance to increasing the presence of Africans at all levels and divisions of the Organisation. We reiterate the need to ensure equitable geographical and gender representation at all levels of the Organisation, particularly in the senior and management positions. We further emphasise that the employment of personnel in the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW should be balanced and transparent.

We commend the co-facilitators on organisational governance issues, H.E. Ambassador Matthew Neuhaus of Australia and H.E. Ambassador Laura Dupuy of Uruguay. We welcome discussions taking place under this facilitation and look forward to consensual recommendations that will give the OPCW a more competent, diverse, and gender-balanced workforce.

The Group wishes to emphasise, that the destruction of all categories of chemical weapons under strict international verification remains an important objective of the Convention. While the Organisation has mainly focused on this core objective during the past two decades, we consider that the enhancement of the capabilities of the States Parties should go hand in hand with the other objectives of the Convention. The future of our Treaty will depend on its full and effective implementation through maintaining a careful balance in resource allocation across all the activities envisioned in the Convention.

The African Group wishes to reiterate its strongly held belief in the merits of the OPCW being a technical Organisation. We encourage all States Parties and stakeholders to work in a spirit of consensus building, transparent engagement, and close collaboration towards preserving the technical nature of the OPCW to contribute towards the enhancement of international peace and security.

The African Group reiterates its strongly held position against the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances. With respect to the ongoing work of the Technical Secretariat in Syria, the Group advocates for the continuous constructive dialogue with a view to reaching consensus between and amongst States Parties in addressing any issues of alleged use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and encourage cooperation on all outstanding issues.

I would like to conclude by emphasising that the African Group of States Parties to the Convention is fully committed to the respective obligations of each of its Members under the Convention, and is looking forward to the complete elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction in the shortest time possible, and is also assuring you of their full cooperation to ensuring the success of this session of the Conference. The Group also reiterates its commitment to continue working with the Technical Secretariat and other States Parties for the successful implementation of the Africa Programme, and funding it under the regular budget of the OPCW.

Thank you.

The African Group would like to request that this statement be published as an official document of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference.

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