

**SOUTH AFRICA'S EXPLANATION OF VOTE ON THE DRAFT DECISION:
"ADDRESSING THE POSSESSION AND USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS BY
THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC", PRESENTED DURING SECOND SEGMENT OF
THE CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS
CONVENTION,**

HELD ON 20-22 APRIL 2021,

WORLD FORUM, THE HAGUE,

KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS

Chairperson of Conference, H E Ambassador, Mr José Antonio Zabalgoitia Trejo

Director-General of the OPCW, H E Ambassador, Mr Fernando Arias;

Excellencies; and

Fellow delegates,

I thank you for granting me the opportunity to present an Explanation of South Africa's decision to abstain on the call for a roll-call vote on the Draft Decision on "addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic", which was carried this morning.

South Africa's position on this matter, which was presented in our Explanation of Vote during EC-94, is a matter of public record. Our vote on a further draft decision on the same matter during this 25th session of the CSP, remains consistent. Accordingly, our Explanation of Vote on this occasion will be very brief.

My delegation wishes to express its profound regret at the fact that the membership of our organisation finds itself at a crossroads, on the first occasion that it has to deal with a matter so fundamental to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). On this occasion, no effort should have been spared to rally the entirety of the membership of the OPCW behind a shared approach, based on consensus, in dealing with a matter of such great delicacy. Accordingly, we urge all States Parties to work towards building consensus and ending the polarisation that characterise the organisation today, along geo-political lines.

My delegation is of the firm view that open dialogue and constructive engagement remain essential ingredients of a cohesive organisation that the OPCW ought to be, towards the realisation of the goal of the universality of the CWC, in pursuit of a dream of a world free of chemical weapons. The continuation of a divergence of views on both substantive and procedural matters in decision making must be resolved as a matter of urgency. It remains necessary for all States Parties to abide to all obligations under the CWC and the decisions of the organisation. In this regard, South Africa remains available to work unremittingly with all States Parties to uphold the CWC.

South Africa's commitment to the CWC remains unflinching and we view any reported use of chemical weapons, at anytime, anywhere, under any circumstances, founded on conclusive evidence, as a grave matter that warrants an appropriate response in accordance with the provisions of the CWC. We remain of the firm view that no cause could ever justify the use of chemical weapons.

I thank you for your attention and kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and to be published on OPCW website.