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MOROCCO

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ABDELOUAHAB BELLOUKI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,

To begin I should like to warmly congratulate H.E. Ambassador José Antonio Zabalgoitia Trejo, the Permanent Representative of Mexico, for his well-deserved election as Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties (“the Conference”) and express to him the full support of my delegation. Mr Chairperson, I am convinced that your proven abilities and professional skills will guide the deliberations of this session towards a successful outcome. I should also like to extend my sincere congratulations to H.E. Ambassador Krassimir Kostov, the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria, for his distinguished efforts and outstanding leadership as Chairperson of this august Conference.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the Director-General of the Organisation, Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his useful and insightful statement, and to all the staff of the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) for their dedication and professionalism. My delegation appreciates the Secretariat’s efforts and the measures put in place to protect our health and to ensure the proper conduct of this session while respecting the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement of the African Group, delivered by H.E. Ambassador Lawrence Lenayapa, Permanent Representative of Kenya, and with that of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and China, delivered by H.E. Ambassador Fikrat Akhundov, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Kingdom of Morocco reiterates once again, in the strongest possible terms, its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances, and for whatever reason. It is a most reprehensible act and a flagrant violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”), and the perpetrators of such acts must be held to account. The States Parties, which are the guardians of the integrity of this legal instrument, which is a pillar of global disarmament, are therefore called upon to work steadfastly to strengthen the regime established by the Convention and to further consolidate our Organisation’s role in achieving a world free from chemical weapons.



Moreover, and in reference to the latest reports communicated by the Director-General and by the Declaration Assessment Team, my delegation notes with satisfaction the verified and complete destruction of chemical weapons production facilities declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. My country encourages the continuation of a constructive dialogue between that State Party and the Secretariat, to ensure the optimal implementation of the provisions of the Convention and the relevant decisions on this subject, as well as to resolve all of the outstanding questions that still remain unanswered.

With regard to the OPCW's capacity-building programmes, my delegation warmly welcomes the Director-General's commitment to Africa. The positive impact of the Africa Programme noted in the recent study by the International Cooperation and Assistance Division is a clear indication of the effectiveness of the activities implemented within the framework of this Programme, including in its fifth phase.

In this connection, Morocco is pleased that the second coordination meeting of the Africa Programme Steering Committee was held online with the participation of countries that have accompanied and supported the Programme, for which we should be grateful. My delegation considers that the sustainability of the Africa Programme depends on a more stable method of financing which, in the long run, only the regular budget can offer.

My country further underscores the importance of coordination between the Secretariat and the National Authorities of African countries in order to optimise Convention implementation in Africa. In this respect, my delegation reiterates its determination to continue to cooperate with the Secretariat to improve the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on our continent.

Here, my country wishes to emphasise that national capacity building in Africa will be achieved mainly through the promotion of active and effective South-South cooperation. The launch of projects for training and the exchange of technical expertise in this framework, in particular in the areas of prevention and protection against chemical weapons, has also proven relevant for our continent. Moreover, the strengthening of laboratory analytical capabilities in Africa remains essential to improving the response capabilities of the States Parties in cases of chemical incidents or terrorist attacks. In this connection, the Secretariat should continue to respond to the training needs that have been expressed by the States Parties.

With a view to contributing to the efforts to counter chemical threats in Africa, Morocco will organise from 7 to 10 December 2020, through the Moroccan Regional Training Centre for North Africa and the Sahel, and jointly with the OPCW, a basic online course in the framework of Article X of the Convention, which is aimed at helping States Parties in the region build their capacities to deal with chemical incidents, including those involving chemical warfare agents.

Furthermore, and in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention and United Nations Security Council resolution 1540, Morocco has adopted a legal framework that establishes a national mechanism for the control of dual-use goods, in order to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and their delivery systems.

My country reiterates its strong willingness to cooperate with African States Parties within the framework of the Mentorship/Partnership Programme established by the OPCW, with a view to promoting cooperation and mutual capacity building among African States Parties.

In this context, my country, which strongly supports the OPCW project to establish a Centre for Chemistry and Technology, underscores the necessity to adapt specifically to the growing needs of expert training and capacity building in the States Parties. This project deserves our support, because it will allow the Organisation to better carry out its noble mission, in particular by strengthening its analytical and training capabilities.

The fight against the risks of chemical terrorism must remain continuously at the forefront of our minds. The use of chemical agents as a weapon by non-State actors remains a serious threat. With the help of the Secretariat, the States Parties, particularly in Africa, must be in a position to counter this alarming threat.

In this connection, my delegation wishes to emphasise the importance of the work carried out within the framework of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, chaired by H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Madonsela, the Permanent Representative of South Africa, as well as the work carried out previously by the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors.

In this regard, my delegation calls for the implementation, within the framework of the Africa Programme, of activities aimed at improving coordination among all stakeholders, and underscores the need to consolidate the technical capabilities for the detection of chemical materials, in particular to fight against chemical terrorism and to neutralise the modus operandi of non-State actors. It is also important to organise appropriate training in decontamination techniques, on-board mobile reconnaissance, and chemical sampling and analysis.

With regard to the issues of organisational governance at the OCPW, my delegation welcomes the work carried out by the co-facilitators, H.E. Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, the Permanent Representative of Uruguay, and by H.E. Ambassador Matthew Neuhaus, the Permanent Representative of Australia, and agrees with their proposal regarding the Organisation's tenure policy. My delegation further supports any proposal aimed at strengthening the implementation of the Convention and at preserving the unity and technical nature of the Organisation.

In conclusion, my country calls on the States Parties to promote a spirit of dialogue and compromise in order to give this Organisation the strength to work effectively to achieve the noble objectives of the Convention, the universality of which must always remain a goal that must absolutely be achieved as soon as possible.

I thank you for your kind attention.

I would ask that this statement be considered as an official document of this session of the Conference.