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NIGERIA

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC
OF NIGERIA TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

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

At the outset, I would like to recognise the extraordinary situation under which this session of the Conference is convened, and express the sympathies of my Government to the international community over the loss of human lives due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We strongly believe that a situation of this magnitude is best tackled when the international community works in concert, and therefore, call on all stakeholders to work in such a manner to defeat the pandemic.

I wish to, on behalf of my delegation, congratulate H.E. Ambassador José Antonio Zabalgaitia Trejo, Permanent Representative of Mexico, on his election as Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”). We have full confidence in his ability to successfully guide the deliberations of this session, and we assure him of our full cooperation and support. We also express appreciation to this Conference for re-electing Nigeria as a Vice-Chairperson, and we congratulate the other Vice-Chairpersons and officers elected to roles of responsibility.

I wish to also express appreciation to the Chairperson of the Twenty-Fourth Session, H.E. Ambassador Krassimir Kostov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria, for his coordinating efforts during that session, and in the preparation for this session of the Conference.

My delegation wishes to commend the Director-General, H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his informative and comprehensive report delivered at this session. We reiterate our support for him as he leads this Organisation in fulfilment of all aspects of its mandate, under the Convention.

We also commend the Director-General and the entire staff of the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) for their innovation in ensuring that the session of the Conference is convened, despite the difficult circumstances.



The Nigerian delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Fikrat Akhundov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Convention and China. We also align ourselves with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Lawrence Lenayapa, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya, on behalf of the African States Group.

I wish to reiterate Nigeria's strong commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Convention, including completing global chemical disarmament, preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons and chemical terrorism, strengthening the verification regime, and supporting the mutual economic and technological development of the States Parties.

Noting the possible negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles, we express the hope that the remaining possessor State Party would achieve complete destruction by the envisioned completion date. We call on the affected States Parties to expedite efforts aimed at the complete destruction of all abandoned chemical weapons and urge for continued cooperation with the Secretariat towards achieving that objective.

We urge continued dialogue between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Secretariat with a view to clarifying all outstanding issues, gaps or inconsistencies related to the initial declaration of that State Party, and we look forward to a successful conclusion of the work of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT).

Nigeria remains firmly against the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in general, and chemical weapons in particular, by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances. In that regard, we welcome all multilateral efforts to prevent, investigate, and prosecute perpetrators of use of internationally prohibited weapons. We reiterate that such efforts must be fully in line with international law, and in the case of use of chemical weapons, strictly in compliance with the Convention.

Nigeria believes that the objectives of the Convention cannot be fully achieved until there is universality of the Convention, and in this regard, we call on the States not Party to the Convention to immediately accede to it without preconditions or delay. We commend the Secretariat for the positive steps taken within the framework of the action plan for the universality of the Convention and call on all States Parties and other stakeholders to utilise their bilateral or regional influence with the States not Party to achieve universality of the Convention.

The Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa commenced its fifth phase in January 2020. My delegation acknowledges the exemplary role of the Technical Secretariat, especially the International Cooperation and Assistance Division, for its efforts at designing and implementing targeted programmes for African States Parties. We commend especially the constant liaison between the Secretariat and the African Permanent Representations and National Authorities towards ensuring that programmes and activities are designed in line with the needs of the African States Parties. To guarantee the sustainability of this Programme, Nigeria reiterates its call for all its aspects to be funded within the regular budget of the OPCW.

Nigeria commends the States Parties, institutions, and individuals who have contributed to or pledged funds for the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology ("ChemTech Centre") project. We reiterate our belief that this project, when completed, will contribute to chemical knowledge retention efforts, as well as the capacity building of States Parties, and encourage all those in a position to do so, to make voluntary contributions towards the project.

Regarding the Draft 2021 OPCW Programme and Budget, which is before this Conference, my delegation regrets that, once again, consensus could not be reached by the Executive Council on its adoption. We believe that the interests of all States Parties and the long-term future of this Organisation are best served in an atmosphere of consensus, especially on sensitive matters like the budget. However, we recognise the imperative for this Organisation to have a budget that allows it to carry out its functions in an effective manner and express the hope that this Conference would be able to adopt the Draft 2021 Programme and Budget by consensus.

We note the reduction of the budget of the International Cooperation and Assistance (ICA) Division, which carries out important capacity-building activities on behalf of the Secretariat. It is our understanding that this reduction is an exceptional arrangement brought about by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the activities of the Secretariat and would not create any precedent for the future.

My delegation also notes that over the last few years, inter-programme transfer of funds by the Secretariat has caused over EUR 1.0 million to be transferred away from the budget of the ICA. We wish to stress that the ICA is one of the core pillars of the Convention, and this should be reflected in its funding and in the utilisation of budgeted funds for its activities. Whilst we understand that these transfers may be due to late payments of assessed contributions, amongst other reasons, we express the hope that such transfers be limited to the barest minimum possible in future.

In conclusion, Mr Chairperson, regarding the appointment of an external auditor for the Organisation, Nigeria calls on all States Parties, particularly the nominating States, to engage in good faith and transparent dialogue, and come to a consensual solution that guarantees an efficient and prudent auditing of the Organisation's finances.

I request that this statement be made an official document of this session and published on the external server and public website of the OPCW.

I thank you.

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