



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Twenty-Fifth Session
30 November – 1 December 2020 (Part I)

C-25/NAT.72
30 November 2020
ENGLISH only

SOUTH AFRICA

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Chairperson,
Director-General Fernando Arias,
Senior members of the Technical Secretariat,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates

I take this opportunity, on behalf of the South African delegation, to welcome Ambassador José Antonio Zabalgaitia Trejo, the Permanent Representative of the United Mexican States, as Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties (“the Conference”). My delegation believes that your guidance will help to steer this session to attain its objectives and a successful outcome. In this regard, I assure you of my delegation’s full support and collaboration. I would also like to acknowledge the Chairperson of the Twenty-Fourth session of the Conference, Ambassador Mr Krassimir Kostov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria, for the excellent manner in which he conducted the Twenty-Fourth Session.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the African States Group by His Excellency Mr Lawrence Lenayapa, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya, as well as the statement delivered by His Excellency Mr 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 Chemical Weapons Convention and China.

South Africa stands in solidarity with the international community during these hard times and takes this opportunity to convey her heartfelt condolences to all the people who have lost their loved ones as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We congratulate the COVID-19 Task Force of the OPCW, and the entire staff of the Organisation, for all the special arrangements and precautions they have made to ensure that this segment of the Conference takes place in order to safeguard the continuation of the work of the Organisation beyond 2020. We also look forward to the remaining segment being convened in the near future in order to complete the business of the Conference and the sittings of future sessions, which we hope will be held in a regular format as soon as the public health situation permits.

South Africa is fully committed to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) and believe we all have collective responsibility to uphold the international norm against the production, use, and stockpiling of chemical weapons established under the Convention. As



with the other weapons of mass destruction, we oppose any use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances. We also support the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as the only technically competent international authority in the field of chemical weapons.

My delegation has taken note of the comprehensive report of the Director-General on the activities of the Organisation, and would like to express its gratitude to the Director-General, H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias, the Technical Secretariat, and the facilitators of various working groups for their dedication and efforts in the implementation of the Convention. We commend their tireless efforts towards the attainment of the mandate of the Organisation by facilitating the destruction of all chemical weapons in order to eliminate their threat to international peace and security, and welcome further progress achieved in this regard.

South Africa wishes to underline the importance of achieving the universality of the Convention. To this end, we call upon the States that are not yet Party to the Convention to ratify it and join the OPCW as soon as possible, to share collective responsibility for ensuring a safe world, free of chemical weapons. The use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, and under any circumstances undermines the international norm against the production, use, and stockpiling of chemical weapons established under the Convention.

We appreciate the efforts of the Technical Secretariat in facilitating capacity-building activities in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge the Technical Secretariat to put more effort and great importance towards the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all provisions of Article XI in order to assist and support States Parties' efforts to meet their obligations under the Convention.

South Africa supports the Organisation's ongoing engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic to resolve outstanding issues, and for providing comprehensive reports on these engagements.

We are likewise contented that the technical issues regarding the Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2021 have taken into account the Organisation's practice of zero-based budgeting. South Africa can therefore support the proposal for the adoption of an omnibus budget to fund the programmes and activities of the OPCW for 2021, as submitted by the Ninety-Fifth Session of the Executive Council.

South Africa also underlines the importance of the full implementation of Article XI in order to strengthen and accelerate the economic and technological development of States Parties, especially in the developing world. In the context of the implementation of Article VII, South Africa encourages the Technical Secretariat to work closely with States Parties and continue providing appropriate, tailor-made assistance and technical support to them in enhancing their national capacities and in carrying out their national implementation measures.

South Africa is a beneficiary of the Laboratory Twinning Initiative. The South African entity, Protechnik Laboratories, signed a preliminary MoU with a Dutch laboratory, TNO, with a view to improving Protechnik's performance in the OPCW Proficiency Testing, in order to achieve OPCW designated status. South Africa is determined to have an OPCW Designated Laboratory with the capability to perform off-site analyses of chemical samples collected by OPCW inspectors from chemical production facilities, storage depots, and other installations, or from the site of an alleged use of chemical weapons. We reiterate that South Africa is committed to engaging in partnership with other governments, the private sector, and civil society in order to effectively implement the Convention.

We welcome the report regarding the status of the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre), which will support capacity-building efforts in States Parties, as well as strengthen the capabilities of the OPCW in responding to the threat of chemical weapons.

We call upon the Organisation to adopt and implement staff recruitment and selection policies and processes that are aimed at ensuring equitable geographical and gender representation in accordance with Article VIII of the Convention.

South Africa commends the achievements reported at the two meetings of the of the Steering Committee of the implementation of the fifth phase of the Africa Programme, held on 26 June 2020 and 16 November 2020, as well as the virtual regional meeting of the African National Authorities, which was aimed at fostering the needs of African States Parties, such as the promotion of peaceful uses of chemistry for a developed, safe, and secure Africa. South Africa looks forward to the continuation of these efforts. We further underline the importance of sustaining and funding this Programme under the regular budget allocation to ensure its sustainability, effectiveness, and relevance.

South Africa appeals to the Director-General to strengthen cooperation with African States Parties and encourages further and regular engagement between senior officials of the OPCW and their counterparts at the African Union in order to strengthen cooperation between the two organisations in the implementation of the Convention.

South Africa urges the Conference to consider mechanisms that can assist the OPCW to return to its once well-established culture of arriving at decisions by consensus. My delegation would therefore like to reiterate the call to all States Parties to strive towards cultivating the culture of consensus in the work of this Organisation. We stress the importance of transparent dialogue and cooperation among all States Parties.

In conclusion, Chairperson, South Africa will continue to play an active role in all aspects of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, while actively promoting and supporting the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. South Africa commits herself holding States Parties accountable for any non-compliance with their obligations, based on irrefutable evidence.

I would like to request that this statement be regarded as an official statement of this Session.

I thank you.

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