



Introductory Remarks by the Director-General, Fernando Arias, at the Third Meeting of the OPCW Africa Programme Steering Committee

25 June 2021, The Hague, Netherlands

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear colleagues,

It is a great pleasure to address the third meeting of the Steering Committee of the OPCW Africa Programme. I warmly welcome all Committee members and observers to this meeting and I thank the Chairperson, Ambassador Lawrence Lenayapa of Kenya for everything he is doing.

The Committee's role as a useful forum for dialogue and coordination with our key stakeholders is highly valued. I pledge the Secretariat's continued commitment and support to the work of this important body.

Mr Chairperson,

The Secretariat has continued to achieve significant progress in the implementation of the 5th Phase of the Africa programme, since the last Committee meeting on November 16th 2020. The backbone of the programme, is in the area of capacity-building and the Secretariat has intensified the delivery of online training activities.

Since the last meeting, the Secretariat has provided 23 online capacity building activities, including 14 activities for Africa. In total, 402 participants from 33 African States Parties took part in these events. This is a very high figure.

Capacity building activities developed by the Secretariat have allowed us to address the needs and priorities expressed by the Member States from the continent, related to:

- national implementation of the Convention;
- effectiveness of National Authorities;
- control over cross-border transfers of scheduled chemicals;

- assistance and protection capabilities against chemical incidents and attacks;
- chemical safety and security management; and
- upgrading laboratory competencies.

Furthermore, the Secretariat continued to develop awareness related to the risks that implies the use of certain chemicals, in general in the world, and specifically in the Africa region.

The Organisation sponsored the participation of nine African scientists in an international chemistry-related conference, and is funding five fellowships for African scientists and four African research projects. Eight additional African research projects are being co-funded with the International Foundation for Science. In the framework of the Equipment Exchange Programme, the Organisation transferred two sets of laboratory equipment from Germany to Tanzania and Sudan, in 2020 and 2021.

As planned under the 5th Phase, the Secretariat continued to improve the visibility of the Africa Programme with a view to increasing support and stakeholder engagement. I am pleased to note that the OPCW Africa Network continues to be developed and maintained. The Network is a reliable platform for information and interaction on matters related to the Convention and now counts 800 African chemistry professionals and programme stakeholders as members.

The Secretariat is also planning to issue the second edition of the OPCW Africa Bulletin in November. The bulletin is designed to offer States Parties and other stakeholders a closer look into the Programme's developments in 2021.

Mr Chairperson

The Secretariat has continued to develop relevant partnerships, with a view to ensuring a more effective implementation of the Africa Programme. Our partners include international, regional and national organisations, academia and laboratories, chemical associations as well as national training institutions.

Cooperation has continued with a variety of international organisations. The Secretariat provided a briefing on the Africa Programme to the Implementation Support Unit of the Biological Weapons Convention, and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) in April this year. These organisations view the Programme as a model to follow for the development

and implementation of a “signature initiative” to strengthen biosecurity in Africa.

At the continental level, efforts continue to streamline cooperation with the African Union. In December 2020, the Secretariat briefed the Peace, Security and Political Affairs Commission of the Africa Union on the Africa Programme and proposed an articulated action plan aimed at revitalising the bilateral cooperation for its implementation. The Commission warmly welcomed the OPCW’s initiative.

Contacts have continued since then with a view to reactivating the cooperation, along the lines of the proposed action plan. The Secretariat would highly appreciate the support of the African Group and the Steering Committee members in this regard. Several capacity-building activities have been organised jointly with other regional organisations such as African Regional Economic Communities and the African Center for Science and International Security.

Mr Chairperson,

The Africa Programme continues to be essentially funded through the OPCW regular budget. The analysis of the funding history shows that 83% of the Programme costs have been covered from the Organisation’s regular budget. To increase the Programme’s impact, the Secretariat has been seeking additional resources through voluntary contributions.

In July last year, the Secretariat developed eight proposals for special extra-budgetary projects through the Programme. I wish to thank the United States of America for the funding provided to support the project of a Specialised Course for African Customs Laboratories. Furthermore, resources from the “Special Fund for Capacity Building of Laboratories” have been assigned to the project of the “Specialised Course on Equipment Maintenance and troubleshooting for Laboratories in African States Parties”. The Secretariat continues to have productive discussions with potential donors regarding the remaining projects. I encourage African States Parties to join the Secretariat’s efforts to identify and secure funding for these valuable projects.

In addition, other Programme capacity building activities in areas of national implementation, analytical chemistry, and assistance and protection continue to receive in-kind and financial support. I wish to thank the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the European Union for their generous and continuing very much needed support of these activities. My sincere thanks also go to the African

States Parties partners with the Secretariat for the delivery of numerous activities under the Programme.

Mr Chairperson,

On the Centre for Chemistry and Technology—the ChemTech Centre—I am pleased to share with you some important milestones.

In February this year, the irrevocable permit for construction of the ChemTech Centre was granted by the Municipality of Pijnacker-Nootdorp, next to The Hague. Last April, the construction contract was signed with a prestigious Dutch company. Construction has started this month and is expected to be completed by end 2022. Pictures of the ground excavation activities in preparation for the foundation works were posted earlier this month on social media.

The Secretariat has launched a series of consultations with Member States and Regional Groups regarding the future activities of the Centre. The Centre's enhanced and enlarged training laboratory, classrooms, and practical training areas will greatly benefit chemistry professionals from Africa. It will allow us to expand the activities related to international cooperation, including under the Africa Programme.

The funding target for the construction of the ChemTech Centre has now also been met, with over EUR 33.6 million contributed or pledged from 49 countries, the European Union, and other donors. I would like to express my appreciation to all the donors whose contributions have enabled this significant achievement.

The ChemTech Centre Trust Fund remains open for further contributions that will help to inaugurate with relevant activities. Such additional donations will provide extra assurances for the successful completion of the project, and for international cooperation projects to be carried out at the Centre as soon as the building is operational. I renew my appeal to African States Parties that have not contributed yet, to consider supporting the ChemTech Centre project with voluntary contributions.

In closing, I would like to reiterate the Secretariat's unwavering commitment to the Africa Programme. I wish you every success in this meeting.

Thank you.