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NIGERIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ENIOLA AJAYI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA TO
THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

I wish to warmly congratulate you Mr Chairperson, Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki of Morocco, on your assumption of duty to steer the affairs of the Executive Council (“the Council”) for the next one year. My delegation has full confidence in your competencies, and we wish you a successful tenure. You can be assured of our full support throughout your term. I also appreciate Director-General Fernando Arias, for his informative Statement delivered at this session and reaffirm the support of my delegation to him and the staff of the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”), as they embark on their assignment in this trying time of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, I wish to register the sympathy of my Government to the international community over the loss of human lives. I also call on the international community to continue to work cooperatively to defeat the pandemic.

The Nigerian delegation aligns itself with the Statement of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China, delivered by H.E. Ambassador Fikrat Akhundov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Nigerian delegation also aligns itself with the Statement of the African Group, delivered by H.E. Ambassador Lounès Magramane, Permanent Representative of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria.

The total elimination of all chemical weapons stockpiles, including old and abandoned chemical weapons, remains the foremost objective of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) and a top priority for Nigeria. We note the reports of the Director-General and National Papers by concerned States, detailing the progress achieved on destruction-related issues. We commend them for their considerable efforts, despite the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and encourage the continuation of destruction of stockpiles within agreed timelines.

Regarding the issues related to the Syrian Arab Republic, my delegation wishes to affirm that good faith dialogue and cooperation remain the best means to resolve all outstanding issues. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic, the Secretariat, and all States Parties to adopt such a methodology in this matter. We note the continuing differences among states parties on the



legitimacy or otherwise of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). We reiterate our call for this issue to be addressed in accordance with Article XIV of the Convention.

Nigeria takes note of the Note by the Director-General on Article VI submission by States Parties and expresses appreciation to the Secretariat for its assistance for States Parties that are unable to submit declarations timeously. We encourage the Secretariat to continue to provide customised support through bilateral consultations for States Parties in the use of its secure electronic tools to ensure accurate and timely submissions.

My delegation commends the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T), under the able guidance of Ambassador Vusimuzi Philemon Madonsela of South Africa, where useful ideas on prevention, investigation, and prosecution of incidents of chemical terrorism have been shared. We underscore the importance of international cooperation and assistance activities in the prevention of global chemical terrorism and encourage States Parties and the Secretariat to allocate adequate budgetary provisions in this regard.

Furthermore, Nigeria takes note of the continuing consultations within the facilitation on organisational governance issues, headed by Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre of Uruguay, and Ambassador Matthew Neuhaus of Australia. We commend them for facilitating useful deliberations regarding the workforce of the Organisation during the intersessional period and look forward to continuing robust engagements under their guidance.

In like manner, my delegation commends the facilitators of Articles VI, VII, and X, and the co-facilitators of Article XI for their work in advancing discussions among States Parties aimed at full implementation of these Articles.

My delegation notes, with concern, that over the last six years, inter-programme transfer of funds by the Secretariat has caused over EUR 2.0 million to be transferred away from the budget of the International Cooperation and Assistance (ICA) programme. 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. In that regard, we call on States Parties to make adequate budgetary provisions for ICA activities, and request the Technical Secretariat to make deliberate effort to utilise ICA budgeted funds for their stated purpose. While we understand that these transfers of funds may be due to late payment of assessed contributions, amongst other reasons, we wish to stress that such transfers negatively affect the full implementation of the Convention, especially in developing States Parties. Consequently, we strongly support the call by both the States Parties of the Non-Aligned Movement and China and the African Group for the establishment of a special fund which will serve to preserve ICA funds beyond a particular financial year and prevent such transfers in the future.

My delegation has taken note of the report by the Director-General EC-97/DG.9, dated 8 June 2021. We seize this opportunity to register our serious concern with the low percentage of professional staff from the African Region. We request the Secretariat to take note of Article VIII paragraph 44 of the Convention and ensure that recruitments into professional positions reflect the geographical spread and diversity of States Parties, as much as possible.

Finally, I request that this Statement be circulated as an official document of this Session and posted on the external server of the OPCW. Thank you for your attention.