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MOROCCO

**STATEMENT BY MR RACHID SEGHROUCHNI
MINISTER COUNSELLOR
PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO TO THE
OPCW AT THE NINETY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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

The Moroccan delegation wishes first to express its sincere appreciation for the remarkable work carried out by the outgoing Chairperson of the Executive Council (“the Council”), H. E. Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez, the Permanent Representative of El Salvador, who fulfilled his mission with great success and worked tirelessly to ensure cohesion, transparency, and inclusion among all parties involved in working to resolve the sensitive issues on the agenda of the Council in the period 2020 to 2021.

My delegation is honoured to see that Morocco, represented by H.E. Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki, has taken over the Chairpersonship of our Council for the period 2021 to 2022, thanks to the strong backing from the Group of African States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) and to the unanimous support of all members of the Council. Once again, my delegation wishes to reiterate its gratitude for your support.

Further, the Moroccan delegation, as a member of this distinguished Council, reaffirms its pledge to cooperate actively with all Member States and with the representatives of the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) to strengthen Convention implementation against a backdrop of open exchange, constructive dialogue, and positive interaction.

I should like to take this opportunity to recognise the dedication and professionalism of the Director-General of the OPCW, Mr Fernando Arias, and that of the Secretariat staff. The Moroccan delegation wishes to thank the Director-General for his comprehensive and enlightening report to this session, and thanks the Vice-Chairpersons of the Council for their respective reports.

Moreover, I should like to express our appreciation for the care the Secretariat has taken to safeguard our health and to minimise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has allowed the work of our Council and the activities of the OPCW to move forward under the best possible conditions.



My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement of the African Group, delivered by our coordinator H.E. Ambassador Lounès Magramane, the Permanent Representative of Algeria, and with that of the Non-Aligned Movement and China, delivered by H.E. Ambassador Fikrat Akhundov, the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan.

Morocco, which is committed to a balanced and optimal implementation of the Convention, reiterates its call for capacity building in the States Parties, particularly developing ones, thereby helping them to effectively contribute to the fight against the proliferation of the chemical threat worldwide and to comply fully with their obligations under the Convention.

In this connection, my country reiterates its support for the fifth phase of the Director-General's initiative to put in place an OPCW Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Africa Programme"), in order to address shortcomings in Convention implementation on the African continent. Morocco, which welcomes the progress made during the previous phases of this Programme, is strongly committed to cooperating with all stakeholders and underscores the need to promote mutual capacity building through South-South cooperation, while taking into account the specific realities of each State Party and each subregion.

In this connection, Morocco is pleased that in June 2021 the meeting of the Africa Programme Steering Committee was held, allowing for a review of Programme implementation and for an exchange of opinions and ideas among committee members. My delegation welcomes the successful implementation thus far of the fifth phase of the Programme, with the sustained coordination and commitment of, in particular, the International Cooperation and Assistance Division and the Programme Coordinator, all in spite of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

Likewise, my delegation is of the view that the continued success and positive momentum of the Africa Programme depends on a more stable and sustainable method of financing. In this regard, my delegation renews its gratitude to the donors for their voluntary contributions.

Morocco expresses, in the strongest terms, its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances, and for whatever reason. To achieve a world forever free from chemical weapons, which remains our common strategic objective, and in light of the current circumstances, my country reiterates its appeal to the States Parties to continue working in a spirit of unity and to promote constructive dialogue in order to safeguard the norm, to strengthen the unity and integrity of the Organisation, and to preserve its technical nature.

Having taken note of the latest reports of the Declaration Assessment Team, my country encourages the continuation of a constructive dialogue between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Secretariat, for the optimal implementation of the provisions of the Convention and the relevant decisions on this subject, and in order to resolve all of the outstanding issues.

The threat of non-State actors and chemical terrorism must give us all pause. This major concern highlights the meaningfulness and usefulness of the activities undertaken by the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, chaired by H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Madonsela, the Permanent Representative of South Africa, and by the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors.

My delegation reiterates its support for the continued consultations led 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, with a view to reconciling the different points of view on the issues related to organisational governance. It should be emphasised that a constructive and inclusive dialogue between the States Parties on questions of governance will serve to support Convention implementation, and to strengthen our Organisation's streamlined operations. Particular attention must be paid to the governance challenges at the OPCW, in particular regarding equitable geographical distribution and gender balance among the staff of the Organisation.

Within the framework of meeting its obligations under the Convention, the Council of Ministers in my country approved, on 28 June 2021, a law to amend and supplement our national legislation regarding the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and on their destruction. In accordance with the decisions of the Conference of the States Parties at its Twenty-Fourth Session (C-24/DEC.4 and C-24/DEC.5), the new adopted law updates Schedule 1 annexed to the said law, through the addition of a series of chemicals, and revises the schedules annexed to this Convention.

My country is delighted with the progress made in the project to upgrade the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store to a Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre). This future Centre will give our Organisation a modern infrastructure that is adapted to the specific needs to address the current challenges in Convention implementation. My delegation welcomes the exchange of points of view that the Director-General initiated among the regional groups to ensure that all States Parties take ownership of the activities at the Centre. The stable and sustainable funding of the Centre in the regular budget will exemplify our common objective to effectively achieve the objectives of the Organisation set by its Member States.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to warmly thank H.E. Ambassador Lawrence Lenayapa, the Permanent Representative of Kenya, and his delegation, for the excellent work accomplished throughout his term as Coordinator of the African Group. Furthermore, we extend our sincere congratulations and best wishes to his successor, H.E. Ambassador Lounès Magramane, the Permanent Representative of Algeria.

I thank you for your kind attention.

I would ask that this statement be considered as an official document of the Ninety-Seventh Session of the Council.

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