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**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF AFRICAN STATES PARTIES
TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LOUNÈS MAGRAMANE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States Parties (“The African Group/ the Group”) to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”).

At the outset, we would like to welcome back H.E. Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco, as Chairperson of the Ninety-Eighth Session of the Executive Council (“the Council”). We are confident that he will steer the deliberations of this session to a successful conclusion.

We also extend our appreciation to the Director-General of the OPCW, H.E. Mr Fernando Arias, for his comprehensive statement and reiterate our confidence in his efforts to further strengthen the work of our Organisation. The African Group also appreciates the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their valuable role in facilitating the implementation of the Convention.

The African Group associates itself with the statement of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Convention and China, delivered by H.E. Ambassador Fikrat Akhundov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Group acknowledges the continuing negative impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and reiterates its solidarity with the international community. We note the measures put in place by the OPCW and all States Parties, in light of the recommendations of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, to ensure continuity in the work of the Council. We express appreciation to the management, staff, and COVID-19 Task Force of the Organisation for their efforts, innovativeness, and adaptability in this regard.

The Group notes with optimism the gradual return to normality in the Netherlands and looks forward to the resumption of the Organisation’s meetings in regular format as soon as the public health situation allows, and hopes for a speedy return to full participation of States Parties in



the work of the OPCW. We further look forward to the resumption and reinforcement of regular international cooperation and assistance activities, including upgrading critical infrastructure and research in chemistry for peaceful purposes.

The African Group expresses the view that only a global access to vaccines will ensure speedy resumption of all OPCW activities as well as the defeat of this pandemic. In this regard, the Group appreciates the support of the international community towards the COVAX programme, aimed at guaranteeing fair and equitable access to vaccines for all countries. We call on the States Parties and the international community as a whole to further support this initiative. We acknowledge the effort of the government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in providing vaccines to the diplomatic community in the Netherlands.

The African Group welcomes the progress made in the implementation of the fifth phase of the OPCW Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa as reported in the Note by the Director-General (EC-98/DG.14 C-26/DG.12, dated 9 September 2021). We further welcome the outcomes of the nineteenth regional meeting of National Authorities of African States Parties, held from 15 to 17 June 2021, as well as the third meeting of the steering committee, held on 25 June 2021. The Group reiterates the importance of fully funding future phases of this programme under the regular budget of the OPCW to ensure its sustainability and remains open to discussion with the Technical Secretariat and all regional groups on this matter.

The African Group appreciates the efforts of the Technical Secretariat in maintaining its capacity-building activities to enhance cooperation with Africa despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, including the adaption of these programmes to online format alternatives.

We call on the Technical Secretariat to continue developing tailor-made programmes focusing on regional and subregional priorities, including the development of laboratory capacities and centres of excellence. We recall the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the OPCW and the African Union, in respect of which we encourage further and regular engagement between senior officials of the two organisations in order to strengthen cooperation between them towards the implementation of the Convention. The participation of such officials at regional high-level forums will play a significant role in this respect.

The African Group appreciates the efforts of the Technical Secretariat, States Parties, and other donors who have contributed towards the construction of the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre), and encourages States Parties to continue making financial contributions to the Centre and its work.

We remain confident that the Centre will play a significant role in promoting international cooperation and assistance aimed at advancing the Organisation's efforts towards capacity building mainly in research and data analytics, forensic and laboratory work, and training and knowledge sharing, especially for African States Parties. In this regard, the OPCW "First Pillar Ceremony" of the ChemTech Centre, held on 23 September 2021, marks a milestone towards the completion of the project and the implementation of the programme of the Centre for the benefit of all States Parties. We remain ready to engage in any further consultations on options and ideas for capacity-building opportunities at the ChemTech Centre.

The African Group, cognisant of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, encourages the United States of America to continue the implementation of the plan for the destruction of its stockpiles in accordance with the Convention and decisions of the policy-making organs. Similarly, the Group encourages China, Japan, and the Technical Secretariat to continue working

in concert to complete the destruction process of abandoned chemical weapons in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and the relevant decisions of the policy-making organs.

We encourage the OPCW and the international community to continue efforts towards ensuring the complete and full universality of the Convention. We call on the States not Party to the Convention to accede to it at the earliest opportunity and without preconditions or delay.

The African Group reiterates its strongly held position against the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances. We note the ongoing work of the Technical Secretariat in the Syrian Arab Republic and encourage continuous constructive dialogue and cooperation between both parties on all outstanding issues.

The African Group commends the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) chaired by H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Philemon Madonsela of the Republic of South Africa and the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors. We look forward to the continuous facilitation of discussions, to promote global chemical security in light of Council decision EC-86/DEC.9. In this regard, the African Group strongly believes that the constant coordination between international organisations and relevant stakeholders is crucial in building awareness on chemical security and advancing global efforts to prevent chemical terrorism as well as the re-emergence of chemical weapons, within the scope of the Convention and the Organisation's mandate.

Whilst aware of the threat of the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons and chemical terrorism as some of the main challenges for the Organisation, the African Group advocates that, as an integral part of its response, the OPCW should continue to focus on cooperation and assistance, capacity building, and the promotion of the role of eco-chemistry for sustainable development. In this regard, we believe that a balanced approach between the verification requirement and the capacity-building reinforcement, including technology transfer and technical assistance, is essential to the achievement of the objectives of the Convention, guarantees its sustainability and future, as well as contributes towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The African Group notes the continuing consultations by the co-facilitators on organisational governance issues with a view to achieving common ground on actionable proposals regarding the need for flexibility in the tenure policy of the OPCW that promotes effective knowledge management. The Group calls for a wider scope of engagement that includes other elements raised by States Parties during the facilitation process. Recalling the proposals of the African Group to the co-facilitators, we look forward to a draft decision which addresses the challenges to balanced geographical distribution in the Technical Secretariat, funded internships and JPOs from developing countries, fellowships and associate programmes, whilst remaining cognisant of the OPCW as a non-career Organisation.

Additionally, the African Group welcomes efforts by the Director-General at achieving gender balance at the top management levels of the Organisation, and calls for the introduction of measures to entrench and sustain this practice. We note the revised sourcing strategy of the OPCW, aimed at achieving equitable geographic and gender balance at all levels of the Organisation's workforce. The Group looks forward to its effective implementation, taking into consideration geographic inclusivity through an open, transparent, and accessible recruitment process. This would afford the Organisation the broad benefits of a diverse, skilled workforce, consistent with Article VIII, paragraph 44 of the Convention.

The African Group has taken note of the Note by the Director-General (EC-97/DG.12 C-26/DG.3, dated 22 June 2021) which outlines the transfer of funds between programmes and within subprogrammes during 2020. We express deep concern that considerable amounts—EUR 2,019,950—have been transferred out of the International Cooperation and Assistance (ICA) Programme since 2015, including EUR 694,000 in 2020. The African Group wishes to emphasise that the ICA is one of the core pillars of the Convention, and this fact should be reflected in its funding and in the implementation of its programmes.

Noting with concern that this trend could continue during implementation of the Programme and Budget for 2022–2023, we request the Secretariat to redouble efforts towards ensuring adequate utilisation of budgeted funds for ICA programmes. Furthermore, the Group calls upon the Secretariat and States Parties to work collectively to address this concern and to come up with sustainable solutions that would enable the retention of unspent funds for future ICA activities, including the consideration of establishing a special fund for this purpose. This is imperative to preserve funds earmarked for ICA activities beyond the financial year.

The Group welcomes the establishment of the working group to develop a proposal on the manner of appointment of future External Auditors of the OPCW by the Conference of the States Parties pursuant to C-25/DEC.10 (dated 21 April 2021), and looks forward to its report on this matter.

In conclusion, the African Group reiterates its strongly held belief in the merits of the OPCW being a technical organisation and calls on all States Parties to revert to the culture of adopting decisions that are core to the objectives of the Convention by consensus. This will ensure the effective implementation of the OPCW's mandate. The Group encourages all Member States and stakeholders to work in close collaboration towards the full implementation of the Convention and preserve the Organisation's technical nature for the enhancement of international peace and security.

Thank you for your kind attention.

The African Group would like to request that this statement be published on the public website and external server as an official document of this session.