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**SOUTH AFRICA**

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF AFRICAN STATES PARTIES  
TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION  
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR VUSIMUZI PHILEMON MADONSELA  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO  
THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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

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

The Group welcomes the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, H.E Dr Eniola Olaitan Ajayi, on her elevation as Chairperson of the Ninety-Ninth Session of the Executive Council (“the Council”). We are confident that she will steer the deliberations of this session to a successful conclusion. In addition, the Group appreciates profoundly the stewardship and dedication of the outgoing Chairperson of the Council, the former Ambassador of Morocco to the Kingdom of the Netherlands His Excellency Abdelouahab Bellouki.

We also extend our appreciation to Director-General 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 (“the Secretariat”) for their valuable role in facilitating the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“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 impact 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 Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Convention as reported in Note by the Director-General EC-98/DG.14 C-26/DG.12 (dated 9 September 2021) and Corr.1 (dated 27 September 2021). We further welcome the outcome of the meeting of the Steering Committee, held on 15 November 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 Secretariat and all regional groups on this matter.

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

We call on the 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 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, training and knowledge sharing, especially for African States Parties. We look forward to the completion of the project in 2023 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 Group appreciates the efforts of States Parties who have contributed to the trust fund of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and encourages States Parties to continue making contributions to support the SAB's efforts aimed at advancing developments in science and technology in accordance with the Convention.

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 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 policy-making organs decisions.

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 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, including consideration by the Fifth Review Conference, with a view to promoting 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 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 Secretariat, funded internships and Junior

Professional Officers from developing countries, fellowships and Associate Programmes, whilst remaining cognisant that the OPCW is a non-career Organisation.

Additionally, the African Group welcomes efforts by the Director-General in achieving gender balance at the top management levels of the Organisation and calls for the implementation of measures to entrench and sustain this practice. The African Group encourages the Secretariat to continue its efforts aimed at acquiring equitable geographic and gender balance at all levels of the Organisation's workforce. We look forward to the effective implementation of the revised strategies which takes 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 paragraph 44 of Article VIII of the Convention.

The Group commends the progress recorded during the Ninety-Eighth Session of the Council and the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties ("the Conference") in addressing the matter of transfer of funds out of the International Cooperation and Assistance (ICA) programmes. We note with satisfaction the inclusion of the African Group proposal in the decision on the biennial Programme and Budget of the OPCW (2022–2023) adopted by the Conference at its Twenty-Sixth Session, which among others notes with concern that in the past years there have been several transfers of not fully utilised funds out of the ICA, in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules. As mentioned in the decision, we reiterate our call on the Secretariat and States Parties to work collectively with a view to achieving the full and effective implementation of the ICA programmes, by ensuring that the relevant OPCW's budgetary requirements are effectively met and programme delivery is promptly executed, in order to avoid or to reduce the need for transfers between major programmes, including consideration of the retention of unspent funds for ICA in a special fund. The Group looks forward to the full implementation of the above recommendation and remains ready to engage in any further consultations on this matter.

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

The African Group, while reiterating its principled position for the balanced implementation of all articles of the Convention, remains convinced that the measures put in place for the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI are of paramount importance for the reinforcement of capacity building of all States Parties. As recommended by decision C-16/DEC.10 (dated 1 December 2011), we welcome the efforts made by the Secretariat in this regard and the outputs of the drafting committee, which streamlined the list of ideas and proposals in light of recommendations and suggestions that emerged from the Review and Evaluation Workshops on the Component of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI.

The Group welcomes the establishment of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference. We look forward to the commencement of its work and are ready to engage in consultations regarding the review and evaluation of the implementation of the provisions of the Convention.

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 States Parties 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.

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

I thank you for your kind attention.

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