



Opening Remarks by the OPCW Deputy Director-General at the Briefing to Non-Hague-Based Permanent Representations to the OPCW - Special Session on the 5th Phase of the OPCW Africa Programme

As delivered on 14 November 2019, Brussels, Belgium

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear colleagues,

At the outset, let me extend a warm welcome to all of you to this special session dedicated to the 5th Phase of the OPCW Africa Programme.

As you are aware, with 52 Member States, Africa represents a key part of the membership of the OPCW. Being a continent free of chemical weapons and with a developing chemical industry, Africa has specific needs and priorities in relation to the CWC, that are more focussed on development and security.

The OPCW has initiated, since 2007, the Africa Programme, as a stand-alone initiative aimed at addressing the African Member States' specific needs and priorities. As the programme completes its 4th phase this year, a 5th phase is scheduled to cover the period from 2020 to 2022. To that end, the Secretariat would like to seize this opportunity to streamline the OPCW cooperation with the continent.

It is also the Secretariat's intention to revitalise the OPCW's cooperation with the African Union in this context. The OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, envisages visiting the African Union in Addis Ababa in the very near future.

Furthermore, in order to streamline the process, the Director-General designated a coordinator for the Africa Programme. The Coordinator was tasked with the design and initiation of the 5th phase of the programme, in close consultation with the African Member States and the relevant units within the Secretariat. Mr Dawsar Drissi was selected for this role. In view of his profile and experience as a former delegate from Tunisia to the OPCW and a Staff Member of the ICA Division, we are confident that he will be an asset for both the Secretariat and the African Group in streamlining the Africa Programme.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is a matter of great satisfaction that the inclusive consultative process, launched by the Secretariat in early 2019, and involving African Member States' National Authorities and

Permanent Representations, has helped identify clear objectives and orientations for the 5th phase of the Africa programme. Based on the outcome of these consultations, the Technical Secretariat developed a tailor-made concept for the 5th phase, in a manner that meets the expectations, needs and priorities identified by the African Member States. The concept was also designed to streamline the programme –to make it more impactful-. After thorough review and discussion, African National Authorities adopted the proposed concept, on the occasion of the 21st Annual Meeting of National Authorities, held last week in The Hague.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me to seize the opportunity of our meeting today to raise two other issues of interest to the African Group.

The first issue is related to the ongoing project to upgrade the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store to a Centre for Chemistry and Technology. In his introductory remarks this morning, the Director-General updated the meeting on the status of the project, noting that an additional EUR 5 million, in voluntary contributions will be needed by July 2020 in order to start construction of the project on time. I want to add that, once established, the Centre will generate tangible benefits for all States Parties, particularly those with developing and transition economies including in Africa. I wish therefore to appeal to African Member States to politically and financially support this project with pledges that suit their respective situations. Such contributions would thereby enhance the ownership of the Centre by Africa.

The second issue concerns the presence of Africans in the OPCW Technical Secretariat. In line with the Director's general appeal this morning, I wish to call on the African Member States to further assist the Secretariat's efforts to increase the share of Africa in the Secretariat Staff composition, by identifying suitable African candidates for advertised positions and inviting them to submit their applications.

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

This concludes my brief remarks. Once again, I am very pleased to join you and without further ado, I give the floor to Mr Drissi to present the concept of the 5th Phase of the Africa Programme. Thank you.
