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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 TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES  
PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

It is a privilege to be part of this august assembly once again. Although, we meet at a time when the world's attention is fixated on geopolitics, rising inflation, the rising cost of gas, and the threat of the use of chemical weapons amidst other issues affecting humanity.

On behalf of my delegation, I would like to congratulate the Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa, H.E. Vusimuzi Philemon Madonsela, on his emergence as the Chairperson of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention"). We have no doubt about his capacity. His excellent pedigree precedes him in every task he has undertaken for the Organisation. As always, we assure him of our support on this new assignment. I seize this opportunity to appreciate H.E. Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Norway, for his successful conduct of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and wish him the very best in his future endeavours. My delegation also commends the Director-General for his commitment and dedication to the Organisation's work, and we congratulate States Parties who have already been elected to various positions at the level of this Conference or the Executive Council. We also congratulate in advance those that would be elected in the course of this Conference.

Mr Chairperson, the Nigerian delegation aligns itself with the Statement of the Africa Group delivered by H.E. Ambassador Francis Kotia, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Ghana and the Statement of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China as delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Nigerian delegation renews its commitment to the Convention. We will continue to pursue the path of peace and cooperation in advancing our interest in the Organisation. In this spirit, we encourage countries that have not yet signed up to the Convention to do so. We believe a world free of chemical weapons is a better place for us all.



As the Fifth Review Conference approaches, the Nigerian delegation commends the effort of the Secretariat for the enhanced preparation through the establishment of an Open-Ended Working Group. This has really put the Organisation in good stead for continuous engagement and brainstorming during the ongoing intersessional period. My delegation acknowledges the Estonian Ambassador H.E. Lauri Kuusing, the Chairperson of the Group, and other Members for their foresight and resilience in the face of this herculean task. We encourage them to keep up the good work while welcoming more diverse perspectives from States Parties and relevant stakeholders in resolving contentious issues ahead of next year's Conference.

The Nigerian delegation underscores the importance of the international cooperation and assistance programme to assist States Parties in the implementation of the Convention. In particular, the Africa Programme, which has recently become an integral part of the programme. As a result, it is heartening to note that feedbacks received from various programmes have been encouraging, particularly in the areas of capacity-building, emergency response, the implementation of an e-learning programme, and so on. We also commend the Secretariat for its steadfastness in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic to deliver 85 events organised for the African region, which were targeted to benefit almost 2,750 participants representing 44 African countries. However, the Organisation cannot afford to rest on its laurels concerning the programme. The sixth phase of the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa should be designed to reflect the specific needs of each State Party. It should reflect on some of the challenges encountered during the implementation process of the last phase. The Organisation should also pay special attention to related issues such as the issuance of visas for prospective participants coming to the Netherlands for training. In recent times, evidence has shown a lot of them were denied visas to participate in some of the programmes organised by the Organisation in collaboration with other States Parties.

It will be recalled that during the Organisation's 101st Session of the Executive Council, the Nigerian delegation underscored the imperative for effective implementation and adequate budgetary allocation for the programme. As a result, the delegation maintains that the Africa Programme should be funded through the regular budget. We call for the full and effective execution of programmes to minimise the need for transfers between major projects, including the retention of unspent funds in a special account as the case may warrant. While we are grateful for the kind gesture made by the Technical Secretariat to mobilise additional resources to actualise some of the planned programmes, we acknowledge State Parties such as United States of America, Canada and France for assisting the programme through their generous donations.

The Nigerian delegation, like other States Parties, is encouraged by some of the developments happening in the Organisation. The target of total destruction of the remaining declared chemical weapons in 2023, the progress made on the destruction of abandoned chemical weapons in Chinese territory, the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary, and the projected completion of the ChemTech Centre this year are testaments to how far the Organisation has progressed in the implementation of the Convention. However, the Organisation, like any human endeavour, is often susceptible to internal wrangling emanating mostly from ideological differences and not from fundamental engagement during proceedings. Unfortunately, this is the reality in the Organisation at the moment. Hence, the Nigerian delegation calls on all States Parties to continue focusing their attention on those germane issues on which the future of the Organisation depends. As an international organisation, we must be deliberate about achieving results through consensus building and good-faith dialogue. In order to put the Convention into effect, we must embrace our proclivity for tolerance and flexibility toward one another.

On the strength of this, my delegation keeps monitoring developments on the continued deadlock arising between the Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic on its chemical programmes. The inability of both parties to agree on the modalities for conducting a twenty-fifth round of consultations leaves much to be desired. However, as a delegation we are well aware of the spirited efforts made to ensure the resumption of the consultations. On that note, we urge both parties to give room for genuine dialogue as a precondition for ending this impasse while we thank all States Parties who have continued to meet their obligations under the Convention.

The Nigerian delegation is deeply concerned about the issue of organisational governance and tenure policy. At the moment, no conclusive progress has been made on the subject, with the expectation that the Fifth Review Conference will provide a clear direction for future negotiations. The Nigerian delegation places premium on equitable geographical distribution as mandated by Article VIII, paragraph 44, of the Convention while underscoring the need for more attention to be given to gender balance at all levels of the Organisation. The Nigerian delegation is well aware of the Conference decisions on the rehiring of inspectors in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2021, coupled with the draft decision to rehire inspectors in 2023. While we welcome this latest move by the Technical Secretariat and its subsequent endorsement by the 101st Session of the Executive Council, the development reinforces the urgent need for the Organisation to make the burgeoning issue of tenure policy a top priority to forestall makeshift arrangements in hiring inspectors.

In addition, the Nigerian delegation takes this opportunity to recommend institutionalised funding for the Junior Professional Officers (JPO) programme. This is an internship programme aimed at giving a window of opportunity to well-motivated students with an interest in gaining experience in international organisations. We believe that this will allow developing countries that have been unable to participate in this programme due to financial constraints to do so.

The Nigerian delegation commends the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group, H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Philemon Madonsela, and the Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa to the OPCW for his sterling leadership and coordination of the work of the Africa Group until recently. The survey distributed among States Parties to assess their position with a view of ensuring that divergent views on the possibility of addressing the activities of non-State actors has deepened perspectives on the subject of chemical terrorism. We believe that some of the responses received will shed more light on some of the ways of addressing the threat.

The Nigerian delegation reiterate that global security issues remain dire and, as such, sustained effort and engagement with relevant regional and subregional organisations are necessary. My delegation acknowledges the past effort made by the Organisation to strengthen relations with regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) and the Africa Union (AU) in particular. We believe this move will engender more visibility for the work of the Organisation on the African continent in the areas of capacity building and peacebuilding, which are urgently needed for the implementation of the Convention and its stability. In light of this, the Nigerian delegation calls on the Technical Secretariat for renewed vigour in engaging with these organisations and relevant partners with a view to ensuring that the hitherto proposed action plans or inactive MoUs already existing between them can be revived accordingly. My delegation will always be available to provide any assistance

whatsoever in this regard. Let us continue to encourage the push to achieve the universality of the Convention.

The Nigerian delegation would like to request that this statement be published on the public website of the OPCW and as an official document series of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

I thank you.

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