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**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF AFRICAN STATES PARTIES
TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR FRANCIS D. KOTIA
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA TO THE
OPCW AT THE FIFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE
STATES PARTIES TO REVIEW THE OPERATION OF THE CHEMICAL
WEAPONS CONVENTION**

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

On behalf of the Group of the African States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (The Africa Group), I would like to welcome H.E. Ambassador Henk Cor van Kwast, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the OPCW as Chairperson of the Fifth Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Fifth Review Conference). We are confident that, given your vast experience and expertise in the field, you will steer this session to a successful conclusion.

We would also like to extend our appreciation to Director-General Fernando Arias for his statement and comprehensive reports and we reiterate our confidence in his efforts to further strengthen the work of the Organisation. The Group also appreciates the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their valuable role in facilitating the implementation of the Convention and in preparation of this session.

We wish also to express our gratitude to the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference, H.E. Ambassador Lauri Kuusing for his dedicated efforts in the preparation of the draft provisional text of the Fifth Review Conference.

The Africa Group associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement and China by H.E. Ambassador Rahman Mustafayev, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the OPCW.

The Africa Group stresses that the prime task of the Fifth Review Conference is to take stock of the operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention since the last Review Conference with a view to upholding the Convention in its entirety and achieving the full, effective and balanced implementation of all its provisions by all States Parties.



The Africa Group wishes to reiterate that the universality of the Convention is essential to achieving its object and purpose, as well as international peace and security. It is clear that the objectives of the Convention will not be fully realised as long as there remains States not Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Africa Group urges the States not Party to the Convention to join without delay or preconditions.

Consequently, the Africa Group wishes to stress the importance of the action plan on universality and the subsequent decisions of the Conference of the States Parties to regularly review the results and implementation of it.

The Africa Group notes that the United States of America is on course with the action plan on the destruction of its remaining stockpiles and wishes to encourage the State Party to finalise the process in accordance with the Convention and decisions of the OPCW policy-making organs. Similarly, the Group encourages China and Japan to continue working in concert with the Technical Secretariat and States Parties to complete the destruction process of abandoned chemical weapons on the territory of China in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and the relevant policy-making organs decisions.

With respect to the ongoing work of the Technical Secretariat in Syria, the Africa Group encourages continuous constructive dialogue and cooperation between both parties on all outstanding issues.

The Africa Group wishes to emphasise, that the destruction of all categories of chemical weapons under strict international verification remains one of the major objectives of the Convention. While the Organisation has mainly focused on this core objective during the past two decades, we consider that the enhancement of the capabilities of the States Parties—particularly in the use of chemistry for peaceful purposes—should go hand in hand with the other objectives of the Convention. The future of our Treaty will depend on its full and effective implementation through maintaining a careful balance in resource allocation across all the activities envisioned in the Convention.

We believe that a balanced approach between the verification requirement and ongoing capacity building, technology transfer and technical assistance are essential ingredients to the realisation of the objectives of the Convention. This will guarantee notable progress in contributing to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The Africa Group wishes to advocate that the OPCW should continue to focus on cooperation and assistance through capacity building and promotion of the role of the use of chemistry for purposes not prohibited under the Convention. In this regard, we recommend robust engagement with chemical industry associations in support of the use of chemistry for peaceful purposes, safety and security, sustainable methods that use non-toxic chemicals for sustainable development.

The Africa Group attaches great importance to the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all provisions of Article XI and emphasises the need to speed up efforts in this regard, including through the adoption of a comprehensive action plan whose Agreed Framework was endorsed by the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties (C-16/DEC.10, dated 01 December 2011).

For the effective implementation of this crucial pillar of the Convention, we recommend further action in the following key areas:

- (i) integrated chemical management, including chemical safety, security and sustainability;
- (ii) enhancing laboratory capabilities; and
- (iii) promotion of knowledge in chemistry.

In this regard, the Africa Group welcomes the progress in relation to the expansion of the OPCW network of designated laboratories to include the first OPCW designated laboratory in the GRULAC region. The Group recommends the need for OPCW designated laboratories in Africa as well and welcomes the efforts of the Technical Secretariat and States Parties towards this end.

The Africa Group underscores the obligation of the States Parties to cooperate and implement the Convention without hampering economic or technological development for purposes not prohibited under the Convention. It is thus imperative to ensure the avoidance and removal of the imposition of any restrictions that are contrary to the letter and spirit of the Convention.

The Africa Group encourages concerned States Parties to fulfil their commitments to technology transfer, material, and equipment for peaceful purposes in the field of chemistry and to remove any discriminatory restrictions.

The Africa Group notes the outcome of Article XI workshops and the drafting committee. We recommend providing a legal status to the outcome of the drafting committee on Article XI in order to facilitate the implementation of the ideas that emerge from the different workshops and those streamlined by the drafting committee.

The Africa Group emphasises the need to address the issue of transfer of funds from the Division of International Cooperation and Assistance (ICA) programmes and to ensure that all funds for ICA are fully utilised to actualise the recommendation made by the decision on programme and budget adopted at the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, including the possibility of retaining the unspent budget in a special ICA fund.

The Africa Group commends the progress made in strengthening the OPCW verification regime in meeting the requirements of the Convention. The Group is aware of new developments in science and technology and their impact on the Convention. In this regard, we believe that the adaptation of the verification regime should be in the strict compliance with the prescriptions of the Convention and its annexes while assisting National Authorities, upon request, in building up and improving on their capacity to fulfil their obligations under the verification regime. In doing so, it is important that the implementation of the Convention's verification provisions be continued in a manner that avoids hampering the economic or technological advancement of the States Parties for purposes not prohibited under the Convention.

The Africa Group recognises the achievements made in the implementation of the Africa Programme since the Fourth Review Conference. The Group encourages the Technical Secretariat to continue its efforts to prioritise the strengthening of relevant regional cooperation mechanisms and bodies. In addition, the Group calls for greater coordination to ensure synergy

at the regional and sub-regional levels with a view to enhancing the ownership of all capacity building activities implemented in Africa under the Africa Programme with the support of the OPCW.

In this context, the African Union Commission and the Technical Secretariat will play an important role. In this regard, we recall the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the Technical Secretariat and the African Union Commission and recommend the implementation of its action plan.

The Africa Group looks forward to the continuation of this effort under the sixth phase of the Africa Programme and underlines the necessity to fund this Programme under the regular budget of the OPCW to ensure its sustainability, predictability and success.

While commending the efforts of the Technical Secretariat to strengthen cooperation with African States Parties through the Africa Programme, we recommend that the Programme should further focus on increasing the participation in activities that promote the use of chemistry for peaceful purposes, in order to enhance national protective capacities as envisioned under the Convention.

In this regard, we encourage the Technical Secretariat to continue developing tailor-made activities covering domestication of the Convention, assistance and protection, the transfer regime of the Convention, and the use of chemistry for peaceful purposes. In this connection, the Africa Group takes note of the important contribution of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and encourages all States Parties to actively engage therewith.

Furthermore, the Africa Group supports the continued exchange of scientific knowledge, equipment and related technologies and appreciates the work so far done by the Technical Secretariat relating to capacity-building programmes and activities that continue to promote the safe use and transfer of chemicals for purposes not prohibited by the Convention.

The Africa Group welcomes the Chem-Tech Centre as a major milestone in the history of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW as a pivotal tool, which will assist States Parties in the implementation of their obligations under the Convention by bolstering the capacity of States Parties and the OPCW in undertaking research, analysis, training, knowledge sharing, capacity building, as well as strengthening the Secretariat's verification and inspection capabilities.

The Africa Group acknowledges the impact of scientific and technological progress on the effective implementation of the Convention and the importance for the OPCW and its policy-making organs and in taking due account of such developments.

In this context, we take note of the report of the SAB prepared for the Fifth Review Conference and stress that the SAB should continue its role in advising the Director-General. The implementation of national obligations and measures in accordance with Article VII of the Convention is a cornerstone of the Convention that should be addressed by this august Conference. There is no doubt that full implementation of the Convention contributes to international and regional peace and security.

The Africa Group encourages States Parties and the Technical Secretariat to continue providing appropriate assistance and technical support to States Parties in enhancing their national

capacities and in carrying out their national implementation measures. In this regard, national legislations of States Parties should monitor the relevant chemical activities in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and obligations of the States Parties. Such effective domestic implementation of the Convention will play a significant role in preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons and its use or threat of use by anyone and under any circumstances.

The implementation of Article X and its provisions relating to assistance and protection against chemical weapons is another important aspect which this Conference should focus on. The Africa Group encourages all States Parties to fully implement their obligations under Article X and to contribute to the Voluntary Fund for Assistance on a regular basis as this would enable the OPCW to develop a state of readiness to provide timely, adequate and effective assistance and to respond positively to the increasing demands of States Parties for assistance, particularly to the victims of chemical weapons.

The Africa Group recognises the establishment of the Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM) in fulfilling the mandate set out in Article X. The Group urges geographic representation in its implementation and looks forward to agreed modalities of deployment, upon request from a State Party experiencing an emergency and in need of special measures of assistance.

The Africa Group recognises the Secretariat's staff as one of the key assets of the OPCW. In this regard, we recall the importance of recruiting the staff of the Technical Secretariat on as wide a geographical representation as possible and notes with great concern the existing geographical imbalance in the Organisation. The Group reaffirms the need for further efforts by the Secretariat in cooperation with States Parties to address the issue.

The Africa Group welcomes the Chairperson's submissions on gender balance and equitable geographical representation in the Staff establishment at the Technical Secretariat. We, however, call for fairness and greater transparency in the processes of employment of highly competent personnel to all levels of the organisation, including more qualified applicants from Africa in line with the Organisation's efforts at improving diversity and efficient delivery of its mandate under the Convention - as envisioned under Article VIII (44).

The Africa Group aligns itself with the call by the Executive Council to establish a working group comprised of representatives of each regional group, to work in close collaboration with the Technical Secretariat, to identify and recommend concrete measures oriented to achieving a wider and more diverse pool of professionals via enhanced candidate outreach and sourcing strategies and processes. It is expected that the working group shall deliver an action plan to effectively address the issue of geographical imbalance and report on its conclusions to the next Conference of the States Parties in addition to the Director-General's regular updates on the subject.

Furthermore, the Africa Group wishes to encourage the implementation of knowledge management processes, while encouraging States Parties to continue to discuss modalities for candidates from developing regions to enable them to join the internship and Junior Professional Officer programme (JPO) of the OPCW. We believe that increased sponsorship for internships as well as JPO will augment the pool of potential applicants from the developing world for the Technical Secretariat's professional positions, contributing therefore to the transfer of knowledge and experience. Such an initiative will support the national implementation measures and promote the peaceful use of chemistry.

With regard to the OPCW tenure policy, the Africa Group requests the Executive Council to consider further discussions on making a recommendation to the Conference with a view to rendering the Organisation's tenure policy more flexible to meet organisational and programmatic needs.

The Africa Group commends the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Terrorism under the chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Madonsela of South Africa and commends his effective leadership.

The Africa Group encourages States Parties, in a position to do so, to support efforts aimed at increasing the understanding of the risks and threats posed by the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors, including through sharing of experiences and best practices. The Group requests the Secretariat to further develop tailor-made support programmes related to chemical security and countering chemical terrorism as well as strengthen education and outreach efforts on chemical terrorism.

In conclusion, the Africa Group would like to affirm its commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention and looks forward to the complete elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction in the shortest time possible. The Africa Group assures you of our full cooperation in ensuring the success of this Fifth Review Conference. The Group expresses its hope that the Conference would adopt a consensual document in a spirit of cooperation and dialogue.

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

Thank you.

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