

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF AFRICAN STATES PARTIES TO
THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION DELIVERED BY THE COORDINATOR
OF THE GROUP H.E. MR. FRANCIS D. KOTIA, AMBASSADOR AND
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA TO THE
ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS (OPCW)**

**ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(THE HAGUE, 5-8 MARCH 2024)**

**Chairperson,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States Parties ("The Africa Group/ the Group") to the Chemical Weapons Convention ("The Convention"). The Group welcomes back H.E. Mr. Lucian Fătu, Ambassador and the Permanent Representative of Romania to the OPCW, as Chair of the One Hundred and Fifth Session of the Executive Council. We assure him of our unflinching support for his leadership in steering the deliberations of this session to a successful conclusion.

2. 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 the Organisation. In addition, the Africa-Group extends appreciation to the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their valuable role in facilitating the implementation of the Convention.

3. The 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. Ms. Mirjam Blaak Sow, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uganda to the OPCW.

Chairperson,

4. The Africa Group commends the progress made since the launch of the Sixth Phase of the OPCW Programme to strengthen cooperation with Africa and acknowledges the progress made in the implementation of its previous phases. To guarantee the sustainability of the programme, however, the Group reiterates the importance of the programme being fully funded under the regular budget of the OPCW and remains open to discussing the matter with the Technical Secretariat and all regional groups. The Africa Group expresses its appreciation to the States Parties that continue to make voluntary contributions to the Africa Programme and many others for their generous support.

5. The Group reiterates its appreciation for the organisation of the Pan-African multi-component chemical emergency response capacity-building exercise for the Africa region "Chemex Africa 2023", by the Technical Secretariat in collaboration with the Government of Algeria, in Algiers from September 23 to October 4, 2023, and

looks forward to more of such events aimed at building national capacities and encouraging regional and South-South cooperation. The Group also commends the Government of Canada for funding the programme.

6. In addition, the Africa Group reiterates its appreciation to the Technical Secretariat and the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco for the organisation of the Five (5)- day basic course on Chemical emergency preparedness for North Africa and the Sahel Region, in Rabat from February 27 to March 3, 2023.

7. We encourage the Technical Secretariat to continue developing tailor-made programmes focusing on regional and sub-regional priorities, including the development of laboratory capacities and centres of excellence in Africa, as well as strengthening cooperation with the African Union Commission.

Chairperson,

8. Following the completion by the United States of America of the destruction of its remaining stockpiles of chemical weapons, the group looks forward to regular progress updates on the implementation of the transitional arrangements for closure of the Plants, notably on decontamination, decommissioning, dispositioning, demolition and administrative closeout in collaboration with the OPCW Technical inspection team.

9. The Africa Group reaffirms its 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 constructive dialogue and cooperation between both parties on all outstanding issues. In this regard, the Group applauds the National Authority of the Syrian Arab Republic for convening the 26th round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) of the OPCW on January 23 to February 1, 2024.

10. We encourage the OPCW and the international community to continue with efforts towards ensuring the full universality of the Convention. We call on States not yet party to the Convention to accede to it without delay and/or precondition. On this note, the Africa Group welcomes the ongoing discussions between the OPCW and South Sudan towards the latter's accession to the CWC. We note with appreciation the recent meeting that was held between the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias and the South Sudan Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Hon. James Pitia Morgan, on the margins of the "Chemex Africa 2023" in Algiers on the processes of South Sudan's accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

11. The Africa 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. We look forward to the continuous facilitation of discussions with a view to promoting global chemical security in light of Council decision EC-86/DEC.9. In this regard, the Africa 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.

12. Cognisant 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 Africa Group wishes to advocate that the OPCW should continue to focus on cooperation and assistance, capacity building and promotion of the peaceful use of chemistry. In this connection, 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. 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 Sustainable Development Goals.

Chairperson,

13. The Africa Group welcomes efforts by the Director-General at achieving gender balance and equitable geographical representation in the Staff establishment in the Technical Secretariat at the top management levels of the Organisation. However, the necessary measures should be taken to address the underrepresentation of the Africa Group in the Technical Secretariat at all levels including top-level management of the Organisation. To this end, the Group calls for greater transparency in the processes of recruitment and selection of personnel to the Secretariat and looks forward to the implementation of the Action Plan on Geographical Representation as decided by CSP-28.

14. The Group looks forward to the effective implementation of the decision taken at the CSP 28 on Tenure Policy and urges the Technical Secretariat to report on same as directed by the Conference.

15. Furthermore, the Africa Group wishes to encourage the implementation of knowledge management processes. This would afford the Organisation the broad benefits of a diverse and skilled workforce, consistent with Article VIII, Paragraph 44 of the Convention.

16. The Africa Group commends the progress made 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 Africa Group's proposal in the decision on Biennial Programme and Budget of the OPCW (2024-2025) adopted by the CSP-28, which, amongst others, notes with concern that in past years there have been several transfers of not fully utilised funds out of the ICA.

17. We reiterate our call on the Technical Secretariat and States Parties to work collectively with a view to achieving the full and effective implementation of the ICA programmes. In this regard, the Africa Group strongly requests that the relevant budgetary requirements and programmes of the Organisation are effectively and promptly executed. This will avoid or help to reduce the need for transfers between major programmes, including consideration of the retention of unspent funds for ICA in a special fund.

18. The Africa Group, while restating its principled position on 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 the EC decision C-16/DEC.10 dated 01 December, 2011, we welcome the efforts made by the Technical Secretariat in this respect 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. We encourage the adoption of concrete measures that enable the implementation of the output of the Drafting Committee on Article XI.

19. Finally, Mr. Chairperson, the Africa Group holds fast to its belief in the merits of consensus building as a means to adopting core decisions that are relevant to the objectives of the Convention. This would enable States Parties to avoid controversies that beset decision-making processes in ensuring the effective implementation of the mandate of the OPCW. The Group encourages all States Parties to preserve the technical nature of the Organisation and work in close collaboration with stakeholders towards the full implementation of the Convention. The Group believes that this will contribute to international peace and security.

19. *bis* The Africa Group recalls the practice of the CSP arising from the prevailing interpretation of Rule 85 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the States Parties. The Group expresses serious concern regarding the practice which has the effect of disenfranchising States Parties by undermining their right to free choice. Additionally, the Group is of the view that the practice runs contrary to the spirit of the provisions and calls on States Parties to preserve the integrity of the Convention. Given the foregoing, the Africa Group calls for a deeper reflection on the said practice with the view to ensuring that States Parties can freely exercise their rights of choice without any procedural limitations.

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

21. I thank you for your kind attention.