



STATEMENT DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTH SESSION OF THE
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (EC-105)
THE HAGUE, 5 to 8 MARCH 2024.

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

1. South Africa congratulates H.E Mr Lucian Fatu, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania on his continued able stewardship of the 105th session of the Executive Council. South Africa assures him of its unwavering support as he continues to lead this session to a successful conclusion.
2. We wish to thank the Director-General of the OPCW, H.E Mr Fernando Arias, for his comprehensive report and extend our earnest appreciation to the Technical Secretariat for their dedication and untiring efforts in ensuring the implementation of the mandate of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the organisation to ensure the destruction of all chemical weapons and the removal of their threat to global peace and security.
3. South Africa associates itself with the statement delivered by His Excellency, Mr Francis Danti Kotia, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Ghana, on behalf of the Group of African States Parties ("The Africa Group) to the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as the statement delivered by Her Excellency, Ms Mirjam Blaak, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uganda on behalf of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention that are Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

4. South Africa remains dedicated to the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all provisions of the Convention. Upholding the credibility and integrity of the OPCW is crucial, and South Africa will continue to cooperate with the Organisation to promote the peaceful uses of chemicals. South Africa welcomes the complete destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles under OPCW verification in July 2023.
5. South Africa stresses the need to preserve the Organisation's impartiality and integrity, and calls on all States Parties to implement effective laws to prevent non-State actors from gaining access to weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, particularly for terrorist purposes. The insights gained from the Table-Top-Exercise held last November 2023, can significantly contribute to strengthening our global response mechanisms against the threat of chemical terrorism.
6. South Africa supports the Organisation's ongoing engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic and efforts to resolve all outstanding issues, including any inconsistencies in Syria's initial Declaration. We thank the Technical Secretariat for the comprehensive reports on these engagements and commends the Syrian National Authority for its active engagement in the 26th round of consultations. South Africa continues to call for the resolution of all outstanding issues in a constructive manner.
7. Currently, we are witnessing some of the most active military conflicts since the end of the Second World War. With the current flare-ups and the calamities of war in various parts of world, *the erosion of international norms is more acute than ever*. As with other international disarmament instruments, South Africa remains deeply committed to the Convention and to achieving its objectives. We all have a collective responsibility to uphold the international norm against the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons established under the Convention. Signing and ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention commits countries to the verified destruction of all stockpiles of chemical weapons.
8. Accordingly, the universalisation of the Chemical Weapons Convention is paramount. Accordingly, South Africa calls on all States not yet party to the Convention to accede to it without delay and/or preconditions. On this note, South Africa welcomes South Sudan's ongoing process towards accession to the Convention.
9. South Africa has noted with serious concern allegations about the use of white phosphorus by Israeli forces following Hamas' deadly attacks on 7 October 2023. The use of white phosphorus in densely populated areas of Gaza and Lebanon would be a clear violation of international humanitarian law. There is an obligation on all parties to a conflict to take all feasible precautions to avoid civilian injury and loss of life. We recall that the use of incendiary weapons are

explicitly prohibited under the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention. Likewise, the use of any toxic chemicals for offensive purposes is prohibited under the General Purpose Criterion of Article II (paragraph 1 (a-c)) of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

10. South Africa recalls that Israel signed the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1993. While this was an encouraging step, we note that more than 30 years have passed without further steps being undertaken towards its ratification. As a result, Israel has continued to avoid the important practical consequence of ratification, while being accorded speaking rights at the Conference of the States Parties. Accordingly, we call on Israel to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention without further delay and to adhere to the norms set by the Convention. This will not only enhance Israel's international status, but would also contribute towards the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, and strengthening regional and international peace and security.
11. Chemical weapons have no place in a civilised world and we condemn their use by any actor for any reason and under any circumstances. They have no use as a deterrent, and their effects are indiscriminate and appalling. As an organisation, we have a unique opportunity to rid the world of this scourge.
12. In closing, we would like to request that this statement be recorded as an official statement of this Meeting.