

**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 SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(THE HAGUE, 09-12 JULY 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 commends the outgoing EC Chair, H.E. Mr. Lucian Fătu, Ambassador and the Permanent Representative of Romania to the OPCW, and **welcomes H.E. Mr Andres Horacio Teran Parral, Ambassador and the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the OPCW as Chair of the One Hundred and Sixth Session of the Executive Council.** We assure him of our 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 commends the Deputy Director-General, Ambassador Odette Melono and staff of the Technical Secretariat for their invaluable 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 achievements recorded under the implementation of the previous phases. The Group further acknowledges with satisfaction **the Director General’s Note EC-106/DG.9 C-29/DG.5 dated 17th June 2024 as well as the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 21st June 2024.** However, to guarantee the sustainability of the programme, the Group reiterates the importance of the programme being fully funded under the regular budget of the OPCW. The Africa Group expresses its appreciation to the States Parties and other partners that continue to make voluntary contributions to the Africa Programme for their support.

Chairperson,

5. The Africa Group reaffirms its position against the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances and reiterate its commitment to the full implementation of the CWC.

6. 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 that require urgent attention. In this regard, the Group commends the National Authority of the Syrian Arab Republic for convening the 27th round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) of the OPCW in May 2024 as contained in Director-General's report EC.106/DG.7 dated 24th May 2024. It is hoped that the next round of visit to Syria by the DAT would yield more positive outcomes.

7. 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. We commend South Sudan's commitment as highlighted in the Joint Communique which was signed by the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias and the South Sudan Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Hon. James Pitia Morgan, in Algiers, on the margins of the Chemex Africa 2023, to "working diligently to complete the accession process as soon as possible.

8. We recall the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and the African Union Commission on strengthening cooperation geared towards implementation of the Convention. The Africa Group calls for renewed efforts by the two organisations to give impetus to the Memorandum of Understanding which has been dormant since its inception.

9. The Group notes the continued effort of the Technical Secretariat in initiating tailor-made programmes - focusing on the needs and aspirations of States Parties, including enhancing capacities of chemical laboratories and centres of excellence in Africa. In this respect, the Africa Group congratulates Algeria on joining the OPCW Designated-laboratory network through the National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology (NICC). The Group believes that for Algeria to successfully attain the OPCW-designated laboratory status is a step in the right direction for the Africa region which now has a designated laboratory since the closure of the laboratory in South Africa in 2006. The Group eagerly looks forward to more designated laboratories in Africa. We recognise the support of the Technical Secretariat and other collaborating partners to this endeavour which will contribute to the expansion of the OPCW-designated laboratories network to all regions and strengthening States Parties capabilities to implement the CWC in responding to any use or threat of use of Chemical Weapons.

10. The Group is convinced that implementing targeted programme impact assessment, results-based approach and embedding the Africa Programme targets in the annual workplan of the International Cooperation and Assistance Division (ICA), will contribute to further accomplishments under the Sixth Phase of this Programme. In this connection, the Africa Group commends ongoing capacity building programmes under the current phase of the Africa Programme and calls for the Technical Secretariat's support for training in the areas of laboratory skills development and chemical safety and security. In this context, the Group recommends the Secretariat's further support for the continuation beyond 2024 of the Analytical Skills Development Course at VERIFIN, Finland and the Basic and Advanced Wuppertal Course on Loss Prevention and Safety Promotion in the Chemical Process Industries jointly organised with the University of Wuppertal, in Germany.

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 connection, 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. Wherefore, 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.

13. The Africa Group takes note of the DG's note (S/2289/2024 dated 23rd May 2024) on Artificial Intelligence (AI) recognising the potential link between AI and chemical threats and its growing importance on the international disarmament agenda. The Africa group looks forward to international meetings and activities as mentioned in the DG's note, including the global conference to be organised by the Kingdom of Morocco in collaboration with the Technical Secretariat on the role of AI in advancing implementation of the CWC in Rabat from 22nd – 24th October 2024.

Chairperson,

14. 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, constructive and corrective 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 Secretariat's report on the status of implementation of the Action Plan on Geographical Representation as decided by CSP-28.

15. The Group will continue to follow the effective implementation of the decision taken at the CSP 28 on Tenure Policy and urges the Technical Secretariat to report on the same as directed by the Conference.

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

17. 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.

18. 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 urges 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.

19. 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 1st 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.

Mr. Chairperson,

20. The Africa Group underscores the merits of consensus building as a means to adopting core decisions that are relevant to the objectives of the Convention. Consensus enables 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.

21. The Africa Group recalls the recent historical 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 tempering with States Parties fundamental right of free choice. The practice which was adopted and implemented in the previous CSP Session some years ago, has effectively imposed an obligation to vote for the maximum number of candidates, thereby undermining the States Parties' exercise of the right to free choice. Additionally, the Group is of the view that the practice runs contrary to the rules of procedure as well as the spirit and letter of the Convention and calls upon States Parties to preserve the integrity of the Convention. Given the foregoing, the Africa Group calls for a review of the practice and expresses its keenness to work with other States Parties towards finding common ground to ensure that States Parties can freely exercise their rights of choice without any undue procedural impositions or limitations.

22. 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.

23. I thank you for your kind attention.