

STATEMENT OF THE AFRICAN GROUP ON FELICITATIONS TO THE NEW DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE OPCW, DELIVERED BY H.E AMBASSADOR VUSIMUZI PHILEMON MADONSELA ON THE OCCASION OF THE 30TH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES: 24-28 NOVEMBER 2025.

Chairperson, H.E Mr Agustin Vasquez Gomez,

Director-General, H.E Ambassador Fernando Arias,

Deputy Director-General, H.E Ambassador Odette Melono,

Distinguished Excellencies and Colleagues,

I rise on behalf of the African Group of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) to convey our hearty congratulations to H.E Ambassador Sabrina Dallafior Matter, upon her appointment as the new Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), effective 25 July 2026

To Ambassador Sabrina Dallafior Matter directly: Excellency, the final recommendation of your candidacy, by sufficient consensus at the 110th Session of the Executive Council, to this 30th Session of the Conference of the States Parties for your appointment as the new and first ever female Director-General of the OPCW, marks a major milestone in the history of the Organisation. The fact that you have reached this felicitous point of preferment for this position, which followed a very strenuous process of straw polling, signals a sanguine acceptance by States Parties of the promise you have made to all to provide authentic leadership to our Organisation.

Your achievement is a powerful reminder of the capability and leadership that women continue to bring to global peace and security, which reinforces the message that women are not only ready but also fully capable of leading at the highest levels of international responsibility.

As we all well know, the mandate of our Organisation is to eliminate chemical weapons; being to destroy all declared stockpiles and identified abandoned chemical weapons, to prevent and mitigate the risk of the re-emergence of such weapons, and the threat of their use by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances, including by Non-state Actors.

Therefore, in acknowledgment of the ubiquitous importance of the full extent of that mandate which seeks to achieve a world free of chemical weapons, the organisation needs to calibrate its posture towards the continued possession by non-State Parties to the CWC. In addition, to remain true to the CWC, the Organisation must re-evaluate its posture towards any chemical weapons possessor State(s) that remain(s) a signatory to the CWC without any visible progress towards accession to the CWC as a signal of an unequivocal commitment to the declaration of such weapons and their destruction.

Accordingly, the crucial position of Director-General of the OPCW which Ambassador Sabrina Dallafior Matter will assume on 25 July 2026, carries with it a significant role of decisive leadership in the work of the Organisation, which the Group believes must be carried out by a Technical Secretariat that continues to improve the dynamism and diversity of its workplace culture, skills and expertise by deliberate efforts to recruit staff from various regional groups to ensure equitable geographic representation and gender balance.

Similarly, building the capacity of all States Parties in need of support is crucial not only to enable them to give full effect to the execution of their obligations under the CWC, but also to expose their staff to workplace experiences that would stand them in good stead to effectively compete for jobs within the Technical Secretariat. Accordingly, judging by her illustrious experience in the field of disarmament and her expressed appreciation of the peculiar capacity building challenges that face many African States Parties to the CWC, naturally our hopes about the future of OPCW Programme for Africa have been raised.

In addition to the foregoing, the broad support behind Ambassador Sabrina Dallafior Matter's appointment today represents an expression of implicit reliance by States Parties on the skills and expertise she brings to helm our Organisation. In this connection, the Group also believes all States Parties bear the important duty of fulfilling their respective responsibilities in pursuit of the noble objectives set out in the Chemical Weapons Convention while the Organisation should spare no effort in navigating the geopolitical complexities of our times, through reinforced multilateralism and guided by international law.

The Group wishes the new DG-Designate every success at the helm of the Organisation and pledges its unwavering support.

In conclusion, the Group requests that this statement be accepted as an official document of this session.

Thank you, Chairperson.