

2 December 2008

STATEMENT
on behalf of the
AFRICAN STATES PARTIES TO THE CWC
during the
Thirteenth session of
the Conference of States Parties
2 to 5 December 2008

Mr. Chairman,

1. Allow me, on behalf of the African States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the 13th session of the Conference of States Parties. We assure you of our full cooperation and support for your efforts to guide this session's work to a successful conclusion.
2. I also convey the African Group's appreciation to the outgoing Chairman, Ambassador Idris of Sudan, for his effective and efficient chairmanship of the 12th Conference of States Parties.
3. The African Group associates itself with the statement made by the Chairperson of the Non-aligned Movement and China.
4. The Group also thanks the Director-General for his opening statement on the activities of the Organisation.
5. We wish to congratulate the Republic of Congo and Guinea Bissau which have acceded to the Convention during 2008, thereby increasing the membership of the Convention to 184 States Parties and bringing the total number of African States Parties to the Convention to 50. We also look forward to welcoming Lebanon who will be joining the Convention soon.

Mr. Chairman,

6. The 13th session of the Conference of States Parties takes place against the background of the successful outcome of the Second Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention. African States Parties welcome the results of the Review Conference and stand ready to implement and build further on these outcomes in order to enhance international peace and security, as well as to ensure that the Convention stays relevant for its Member States.

Mr. Chairman,

7. The African States Parties reiterate their firm conviction that the destruction of all chemical weapons remains the primary objective of this Organisation. We therefore welcome, and congratulate, A State Party on the destruction of its chemical weapons stockpile. This successful completion is an inspiration to all States Parties to continue to pursue the destruction of chemical weapons with vigour in order to rid the world of these weapons of mass destruction.
8. African States Parties have taken note of the destruction efforts undertaken by the remaining possessor States Parties during the past year and we commend them for their efforts. However, we remain concerned at the large quantity of chemical weapons stockpiles that still has to be destroyed with less than four years remaining before the final destruction deadline. We call on the major possessor States Parties to ensure that they complete their destruction programmes within the deadlines provided for in the Convention and in accordance with the decisions of the 11th session of the CSP.

Mr. Chairman,

9. African State Parties have demonstrated strong commitment to the object and purpose of the Chemical Weapons Convention over the past number of years by making great strides in the implementation of their obligations under the Convention particularly in terms of the number of States Parties that have designated National Authorities as well as those engaged in legislative processes as part of their national implementation measures. We remain committed to implementing, in full, all of our obligations including those under Article VII of the Convention.
10. It is important, however, that adequate and timely assistance be provided to requesting States Parties to assist them in this regard.
11. We welcome the constructive spirit that currently exists amongst States Parties on the implementation of Article VII and support the efforts of the facilitator to guide our work to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Chairman,

12. The African Group of States Parties would like to acknowledge the positive steps which the Technical Secretariat is undertaking in implementing the Programme for Africa. We are encouraged by the enthusiasm and hard work of the International Cooperation and Assistance division which is helping to gradually establish effective and meaningful cooperation and assistance with African States Parties.
13. We, however, appeal to the Technical Secretariat to intensify its efforts to identify and initiate new additional initiatives which could contribute directly to building capacity and transferring skills to African States Parties as well as assisting them with the implementation of the Convention. We look forward to

continued and fruitful cooperation with the Technical Secretariat that would lead to the establishment of further tangible actions and concrete projects for the implementation of the Programme.

14. We call upon donor States Parties to realise additional voluntary contributions that could provide further substantial assistance to African States Parties, through the Programme for Africa. In this regard African States are ready and willing to work with donor States Parties to attain the objectives of the Programme.

Mr. Chairman,

15. The Second Review Conference urged the Executive Council to reach early agreement on the full implementation of Article XI as well as calling for adequate funding to be made available for capacity building and transfer of skills programmes. We welcome the existing international cooperation programmes of the Technical Secretariat and reiterate the importance of steadily increasing, on an annual basis, the amount of regular budget funding allocated for international cooperation as well as increasing its human resource capacity. This will allow the Organisation's programmes to keep pace with the needs of States Parties.
16. We fully support current efforts to explore ways of developing concrete measures, within an agreed framework, so as to ensure the promotion of international cooperation in the field of chemical activities through the exchange of scientific and technical information, chemicals and equipment.
17. The full implementation of Article XI is of particular importance in order to make the Convention more relevant to a large number of States Parties that possess neither chemical weapons nor any substantial chemical industry. By assisting these States Parties in the development of their chemical capacity and industry we in turn greatly enhance their ability to contribute to the maintenance of international and regional peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

18. African States Parties attach particular importance to the implementation of Article X which provides for assistance and protection to States Parties against chemical weapons. Important elements in the implementation of this Article include the need for practical capacity building as well as the transfer of material and equipment to deal with chemical incidents on a regional and sub-regional basis. Current chemical industrial development as well as the transportation of large quantities of chemicals across borders, clearly calls for the broad application of this Article to enable it to address a wider range of chemical incidents.

19. It is therefore important that the current training and assistance programmes of the OPCW focus on establishing or strengthening States Parties' capacity to respond to a chemical attack or incident. The Organisation should also evaluate, and adjust where necessary, its procedures for mobilising and coordinating assistance, including equipment, to ensure that it can adequately respond to requests from African States Parties.
20. In this regard, African States Parties welcome the offer by the Government of Tunisia to host the next exercise on the delivery of assistance - ASSISTEX III - during the first half of 2010. This offer illustrates, once again, the commitment of African States Parties to the object and purposes of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We express our full support for the preparation of this important event and its successful outcome.

Mr. Chairman,

21. The threat of global terrorism which confronts us, gives added urgency to the work of our Organisation. African States Parties believe the OPCW has a role to play among international organisations in preventing access to chemical weapons by non-state actors and by providing assistance in the event of a chemical attack. In this framework, the implementation of Article X is of particular importance.
22. We also believe that the OPCW's contribution to the fight against terrorism needs to be addressed in a substantive manner through the Open-ended Working Group on Terrorism. The African Group therefore calls for such consultations to be facilitated as soon as possible.
23. We further welcome all positive collaboration and cooperation between the OPCW, States Parties, regional centres for counter-terrorism, such as the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, and other international organisations in combating the global threat of terrorism.

Finally Mr. Chairman,

24. We would urge the Technical Secretariat to ensure, through its recruitment processes, equitable geographical representation in the professional ranks of the Organisation, particularly in senior and management positions.
25. The African Group would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the 13th session of the Conference of States Parties.

Thank you