

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICA GROUP OF STATES PARTIES
TO THE CWC, DURING THE 17TH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE
STATES PARTIES,**

The Hague, 26th November, 2012

Delivered By:

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Mr. Chairperson,

1. On behalf of the Africa Group, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the Seventeenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. We are confident that you will steer our work towards a successful conclusion, as you have always done in the past, and we assure you of our full cooperation and support.
2. I am also pleased to convey the Africa Group's appreciation to the outgoing Chairperson, *H.E. Mr. Paul Arkwright*, Ambassador of the United Kingdom, for his commitment, leadership, and hard work as Chairperson of the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.
3. The Africa Group of States Parties associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and China by the *H.E. M. M. Akhondzadeh*, Deputy Minister for International Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
4. The Group has also taken note of the Opening Statement by the *Amb. Ahmed Uzumcu*, Director-General of the Organisation of the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the activities of the Organization, and wishes to express its appreciation for the professional manner in which he continues to manage the affairs of the Organization.

Mr Chairperson,

5. During the 16th CSP, the Africa Group addressed two primary issues; the first was relating to the challenges that confront the Organisation and the States Parties that will continue to possess stockpiles of chemical weapons after the landmark failure to meet the 29 April 2012 final extended deadline, as well as the related issues of the old chemical weapons and abandoned chemical weapons. The second issue was the importance of the Convention's obligation to promote the peaceful application of chemistry. The Africa Group reiterates its position with regard to these issues during this 17th Session of the CSP.

6. During the course of the preceding year, since the 16th Session of the CSP, the Africa Group wishes to note some important developments which took place regarding a number of issues, amongst them:

- The rightful placement of the International Cooperation Assistance (ICA) Programme in Chapter One (1), thus recognizing it as an integral part of Operational Programmes and activities of the Organization;
- The establishment of the Strategy and Policy Sub-Programme initiated by the DG of the OPCW, which aims at providing unique cross-cutting policy and strategy services to all divisions of the Organization and would also take a leading role in the formulation of strategies across the Secretariat;
- The reduction of the number of Executive Council Sessions to three (3) per annum, instead of four (4);
- The timely agreement on the Programme and Budget of the Organization for 2013;
- The decisions taken on abandoned chemical weapons and old chemical weapons.

7. The Africa Group wishes to reiterate its traditional positions on:

- The failure to meet the final extended deadline of 29 April 2012 for the destruction of chemical weapons – the matter which I will address in detail later in this statement;
- Universality of the Convention;
- The continued implementation of the Programme for Africa by the Technical Secretariat;
- The implementation of national obligations and national implementation measures in accordance with Article VII of the Convention;
- The implementation of Article X and its provisions relating to assistance and protection against chemical weapons;
- The development of agreed concrete measures and recommendations to ensure the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI;
- The role that the OPCW can play in the fight against terrorism;
- The need for equitable geographical and gender representation in the professional ranks of the Organisation, particularly in the senior and management cadres;
- The consultations that are taking place on the future role of the Organisation; and
- On the improved and effective functioning of the Executive Council.

Members of the African Group may also address these issues when the Conference comes to the relevant agenda items.

Mr Chairperson,

8. The Africa Group has taken note of the presentations and reports that have been made by the States Parties concerned, since the 16th Session of the Conference, on the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles, of old chemical weapons and of abandoned chemical weapons, and would

like to commend the States Parties concerned on the progress that they have made so far. The African States Parties reiterate that the destruction of all chemical weapons is one of the core objectives of this Organization, not least because of the fact that the continued existence of chemical weapons is a threat to international peace and security.

9. It is in this context that the Group would like to address the issue of the final extended deadline which was an important milestone in the history of this Organization. The Sixty-Eighth Session of the Executive Council was a particularly important and unique meeting in the history of the Executive Council. It was momentous in that the Organization had to confront a situation where one of the key provisions of the Convention had not been fully met and where key decisions of previous Sessions of the Executive Council had not been fully implemented. By that we refer to the provisions contained in the Convention-related to the final extended deadline of 29 April 2012 for the destruction of chemical weapons and to relevant Executive Council decisions dealing with the need to meet this deadline in the cases of chemical weapons stockpiles, abandoned chemical weapons and old chemical weapons. Like many other States Parties, the African Group is still disappointed that the 29 April 2012 deadline was not fully met.

10. During the Sixty-Eighth Session of the Executive Council we heard a report from the Director General in which he determined that the 29 April 2012 deadline had not been fully met. Under normal circumstances these developments could have led to a crisis with the Convention and within the Organization. Fortunately, after intensive preparatory work undertaken by the Conference of States Parties, the Executive Council and the States Parties concerned, today we are in a position where there is no crisis and where the necessary decisions that determine how this situation should be dealt with after the expiry of the 29 April 2012 deadline are all in place.

11. The Africa Group would like to underline that the adoption of the decisions relating to the final extended deadline was done on the basis of a clear acceptance by all States Parties and their unequivocal commitment for the complete destruction of their remaining chemical weapons in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and with the application of the measures contained in the relevant decisions. We would like, therefore, to further emphasize that each of the States Parties concerned, be it chemical weapons stockpiles, abandoned chemical weapons or old chemical weapons, should make every effort to complete their destruction in the shortest time possible in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and its Verification Annex and under strict verification of the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation as prescribed under the Convention and its Verification Annex.

12. The Africa Group continues to appreciate the Director-General's efforts to strengthen cooperation with African States Parties through the Africa Programme. These efforts aim to give strategic direction to the engagement with the Technical Secretariat. They are also geared towards the full and effective implementation of the Convention, by addressing factors that hinder the development of national capacities of African States Parties, with a view to encouraging progress towards their successful implementation of the CWC. They further aim to increase participation in programmes and activities that promote the use of chemistry for peaceful purposes, in order to enhance national protective capacities. The Group recognizes the importance of ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated to the programme to ensure its success. These resources are drawn from the regular budget, voluntary contributions and contributions in kind. In this regard the Group welcomes and look forward to the side event being arranged by the TS and the EU on the Africa programme later this week.

Mr Chairperson,

13. The importance of the obligations contained in the Convention to promote the peaceful application of chemistry should not be underestimated. In relation to this, we commend the work of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and encourage all States Parties to actively engage with it. The Africa Group also support the continued exchange of scientific knowledge, equipment and related technologies. We appreciate the work done by the Technical Secretariat with regard to the capacity-building programmes and activities that continue to promote the safe use and transfer of chemicals for purposes not prohibited by the Convention.

Mr Chairperson,

14. The Africa Group commends the work of the Chairperson, *H.E. Prof. Ruthie C. Rono*, Ambassador of Kenya, to the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T). We believe the fruitful discussions held in the three informal consultations so far this year will result in practical outcomes that will enable States Parties and the OPCW Technical Secretariat to actively engage in their global efforts to curb the threat of toxic-chemicals.

15. The Africa Group commends the work of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) for The Third Review Conference, under the stewardship of *H.E. Nassima Baghli*, Ambassador of Algeria. We look forward to the report of the Chairperson of the OEWG to be made available to all States Parties in Mid-December.

16. The African States Parties attach great importance to the process of discussions on issues related to the future development of the Organization emanating from the recommendations of the Advisory Panel established by the Director-General on the future priorities of the Organization. We remain convinced that the outcome of the panel's work contributed positively to the discussions that have taken place so far among the States Parties on the matter in the context of the Ambassador's Retreat organised by the Director-General. The Group would like to reiterate its earlier position on the matter that any decision on this issue, should be decided upon by the Policy Making Organs (PMO) of the Organization. Our view remains that States Parties, through the PMOs need to find an appropriate and agreed forum to facilitate consideration of these issues in a thorough, transparent and holistic manner aiming at reaching consensus amongst States Parties. In this regard, the Group wishes to emphasize, once again, that the core objective of this Organization is to destroy all categories of chemical weapons under strict international verification. While we focus on this core objective of the Organization, we also should attempt to maintain a careful balance in resource allocation across all the activities envisioned in the Convention in the most efficient and effective manner possible, in order for it to be sufficiently responsive to its priorities. Finally on this matter, the Group wishes to reiterate that it favours an approach that allows for natural progression and development of the Organization with regard to its activities and programmes.

17. While thanking you, we would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Seventeenth Session of the Conference of States Parties.