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AFRICAN UNION

**STATEMENT BY DR TAREK A. SHARIF
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AT THE THIRD REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Mr Chairperson,

On behalf of the African Union, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the Third Review Conference. I am confident that you will steer the work of the Conference towards a successful conclusion, and assure you of the African Union's full support.

The African Union takes note of the statement of the Director-General of the OPCW, H.E. Ambassador Ahmed Üzümcü, and wishes to express its appreciation for the professional manner in which he continues to manage the affairs of the Organisation. The African Union looks forward to your participation at the upcoming African Union Summit in May 2013.

Since the Second Review Conference, there have been significant achievements, as well as challenges, to the full and effective implementation of the Convention. The Third Review Conference provides States Parties with an ideal opportunity to take stock of accomplishments and explore how best to meet the challenges that lie ahead—in the next five years and beyond.

The African Union supports effective and sustained action aimed at fulfilling the core objectives of the Convention and addressing all matters relating to its universality, complete destruction of chemical weapons, including old and abandoned chemical weapons, and preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

The Second Review Conference reiterated that the concept of universality of the Convention is essential to achieve its objective and purpose and to enhance international peace and security. Since then, five countries joined the Convention, including the African Union Member State of Guinea Bissau. The African Union commends these countries for their commitment to a world free of chemical weapons and further calls on all States not Party to join the Convention without further delay and conditions.

While the African Union remains concerned with the failure to meet the final extended deadline of 29 April 2012 for the destruction of all chemical weapons, it supports the decision adopted by the Conference of the States Parties at its Sixteenth Session which provided for a



number of transparency and confidence-building measures to be implemented by the Secretariat of the OPCW and the possessor States Parties concerned in such an event. In this regard, the African Union calls upon these concerned possessor States to spare no efforts, and in full conformity with the Convention, to implement fully and in a timely manner the detailed plans for destruction which they have submitted.

The re-emergence of chemical weapons on the other hand can only be prevented through fully establishing and enforcing the administrative and legislative measures required by the Convention. Universal adherence to the Convention does not only provide the legal basis to the prohibitions of the Convention at the national level, but it is also critical for the authority and effectiveness of the Convention, and the confidence-building measures and reliable assurances it is meant to provide.

The African Union, in collaboration with the Technical Secretariat, has spared no effort in promoting the goals of the Convention and its universality within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the African Union and the OPCW in January 2006, as well as within the framework of the decision on the implementation and universality of the Convention, adopted at the Thirty-Eighth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, held in 2002.

Despite the progress made on this front, there remain challenges that are diverse and unique to African Union Member States in both acceding and adhering to the Convention. The African Union therefore supports the efforts of the Technical Secretariat in implementing a targeted and tailor-made approach to meet specific national contexts. The African Union is further working with the Technical Secretariat in exploring innovative approaches to sub-regional cooperation and pooling of resources and expertise, including through engaging the Regional Economic Communities within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture.

The African Union seizes this opportunity to commend the efforts of its Member States which, out of their commitment to the Convention and as they face competing national developmental priorities, continue to strive to meet their obligations with limited resources. The African Union further wishes to express its appreciation to the Technical Secretariat for the assistance and support being provided to African Union Member States, including through the Africa Programme.

Mr Chairperson, the Third Review Conference takes place at a time of increased chemical innovation, as well as at a time of emerging threats relating to chemical safety and security. In this regard, the African Union commends the work of H.E. Professor Ruthie Rono, Ambassador of Kenya, and Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism as well as H.E. Nassima Baghli, Ambassador of Algeria, and Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Third Review Conference.

In concluding, and on behalf of the Africa Union, I wish the Conference fruitful deliberations and request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Conference.