

**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.
VUSIMUZI MADONSELA, AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
TO THE ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL
WEAPONS (OPCW),**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTH SESSION
OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

(THE HAGUE, 4-7 MARCH 2025)

**Chairperson,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

1. 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 *H.E. Mr Andres Horacio Teran Parral, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the OPCW, Chairperson of this One **Hundred and Eighth** Session* of the Executive Council for his leadership at the previous session. We assure him of our support 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 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.
4. The Group commends the progress made since the launch of the Sixth Phase of the OPCW Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa (The Africa Programme) and acknowledges the achievements recorded under the implementation of the previous phases. However, to guarantee its sustainability, the Group reiterates the importance of the programme being fully funded under the regular budget of the OPCW. The Group expresses its appreciation to the States Parties and other partners that continue to make voluntary contributions to the Africa Programme for their support.
5. The 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. The Group takes note of the recent exchanges and the visit of the OPCW Director-General on 8 February 2025, to Damascus, which has opened a new dialogue with the new Syrian Transitional Government. We also commend Qatar's role as a revitalising channel for engagement and keep it open for further prospects for cooperation. These positive steps can set the stage to work together for definitively closing the Syrian chemical weapons file and achieving the Convention's core objectives.
7. The Group expresses satisfaction with the EC visit to China in September 2024 and commend China and Japan for their cooperation on the work being done under the supervision of the Technical Secretariat to achieve destruction of the Abandoned Chemical Weapons in China, notwithstanding the challenges encountered in the process. Recognising the dangers posed by the abandoned Chemical Weapons in the affected communities, the group calls on Japan to seriously consider the recommendations made by China to facilitate the processes for the recovery and destruction of the weapons. The Group

therefore looks forward to the full destruction of all Japanese ACWs, including the implementation of the Action Plan agreed at EC 101 to ensure that the deadline of 2027 is met.

8. We encourage the Technical Secretariat and the international community to continue with efforts towards achieving 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.
9. 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. We are encouraged by the efforts of the Technical Secretariat in pursuing a number of different avenues for giving effect to the MOU and also pushing for the implementation of the specific actions stipulated therein.
10. 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. We note with appreciation the milestone reached in 2024 with the establishment of an OPCW-designated laboratory in Africa, the National Institute Criminalistic and Criminology (NICC) of Algeria. 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. We believe this will strengthen States Parties' capabilities to implement the CWC in responding to any use or threat of use of chemical weapons. The Group congratulates the Algerian Institute (NICC) being co-recipient of the prestigious OPCW- The Hague Award for 2024 as recognition of its efforts in contributing to achieving the CWC goals for a World free of chemical weapons.

11. 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 significantly contribute to the continued accomplishments of the Sixth Phase of this Programme. In this connection, the Group commends the 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.
12. The 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 Group strongly believes that constant coordination between international organisations and relevant stakeholders, within the scope of the Convention and the Organisation's mandate, 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.
13. 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 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. Therefore, 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.

14. The Group takes cognisance of the Technical Secretariat's Note (S/2360/2025 dated 29 January 2025) on the OPCW first Global Conference on the Role of AI held in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, from 22 to 24 October 2024, which informs about the Conference's valuable conclusions and the current and future discussions and initiatives within the OPCW. This pioneering conference constitutes a reference point for a better understanding of the Role of AI in the implementation of the Convention to address the evolving risks and threats posed by AI enabled technologies in the fields of chemical security and chemical disarmament.
15. The Group believes that the time is ripe for the OPCW to consider a strategy on the use of Emerging Technologies especially Artificial Intelligence, in the work of the OPCW to deepen internal capabilities of the organisation, noting that the UN adopted the first non-binding global resolution in 2024 on artificial intelligence.

Chairperson

16. The 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 African 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.
17. The Group will continue to follow the effective implementation of the decision taken at the CSP 28 on Tenure Policy. The Group is of the firm belief that this matter is of paramount importance within the current context of the organization and entreats the Technical Secretariat to report thereon as directed by the Conference.

18. Furthermore, the Group wishes to encourage the implementation of knowledge management processes at the organisation. This would afford the Organization the broad benefits of a diverse and skilled workforce, consistent with Article VIII, Paragraph 44 of the Convention.
19. The 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 Group's proposal in the decision on Biennial Programme and Budget of the OPCW for the term (2024-2025), which, amongst others, notes with concern that in past years there have been several transfers of not fully utilised funds out of the ICA.
20. 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 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.
21. The 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 for 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, notably, on the new initiatives on the three focus areas of integrated chemicals management, enhancement of laboratory capabilities, and chemical knowledge promotion and exchange. We encourage the adoption of concrete measures that enable the implementation of the output of the Drafting Committee on Article XI.

22. The 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.
23. The Group welcomes the recent decision of the General Committee, on 25 February 2025, to establish an Open-Ended Working Group pursuant to a decision of CSP-29 in terms of which the General Committee was enjoined to define and establish an appropriate and inclusive framework for deliberations, with the support of the Office of the Legal Advisor of the OPCW, on the contents of the document drafted and circulated by the Group in November 2024, entitled “Non-Paper on the Irregular Voting Procedure at the OPCW”. The Group raised a concern about the implementation of a practice that was adopted during CSP-22 in 2017, relating to implementation of the rules of procedure for the election of members of Executive Council. The Groups is keen to fully participate in the process in anticipation of an outcome that is acceptable to the generality of States Parties and appreciates that the Open-Ended Working Group to be established will submit its progress and final reports and recommendation to the General Committee for final presentation to the CSP-30.
24. The Group notes the contents of the “Advisory Legal Opinion: Prevailing Interpretation of Rule 85 of the rules of Procedure of the Conference of the States Parties” rendered by the Office of the Legal Advisor of the OPCW and will fully engage with the substance thereof as part and parcel of deliberations under the auspices of the Open-Ended Working Group.
25. The Group requests that this statement be published on the public website of the OPCW and the catalyst as an official document of this session and thanks you for your kind attention.