



**STATEMENT DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTH SESSION OF THE
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (EC-108)**

THE HAGUE, 4-7 MARCH 2025.

Chairperson, Your Excellency Ambassador and the Permanent Representative of Ecuador, Mr Andrés Terán Parral,
Director-General, Your Excellency Ambassador Fernando Arias,
Excellencies and Distinguished delegates,
Senior Members of the Technical Secretariat,

1. My delegation would like to express its heartfelt felicitations and its pledge of full support to His Excellency Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ecuador, Mr Andrés Terán Parral, during this 108th session of the Council. We trust that, as in the past, you will steer the proceedings of this session towards a successful conclusion.
2. My delegation also wishes to express its profound gratitude to the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his comprehensive statement and reports, acknowledge the excellent supportive role of the Deputy Director-General, Ambassador Odette Melono, as well as convey its appreciation to the management and staff of the Technical Secretariat for their professional services to the OPCW.

3. South Africa aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the African Group and the Non-Aligned Movement and China, and wishes to render the following observations in its national capacity, as a profound expression of its continuing commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), working steadfastly towards its universality and adherence to the vision of the realisation of a world free of chemical weapons, the threat of their destructive use.
4. Further to the establishment of the Chem-Tech Centre, the OPCW occupies the unique position to demonstrate that chemistry and technology can effectively be used only for peaceful purposes, in pursuance of the noble goals of human development.
5. Despite progress made by the OPCW to eliminate the possession and use of chemical weapons, the pending resolution of the Syrian Dossier has unfortunately held back progress on the determination on the completeness or otherwise of the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic of its chemical weapons stockpiles. In view of the recent political developments in the Syrian Arab Republic, South Africa sincerely hopes that the Technical Secretariat would move decisively towards the finalisation of its work with the transitional government in the Syrian Arab Republic. In this regard, South Africa urges the Council to encourage the Technical Secretariat to calibrate its approach to resolving all the outstanding issues.
6. The proliferation of chemical weapons and their use by non-state actors in the carrying out of their enterprise not only pose a threat to OPCW but also has a serious bearing on global security and political stability. The Middle East and North Africa, not exclusively, are some of the regions most affected regions by terrorism to varying degrees. In this context, acts of terrorism of all kinds, more especially those involving the use of chemical weapons pose a threat to each States Party that is a member of the OPCW, thereby requiring the organisation to always strive to stay ahead of the curve, including the impact of the use of Artificial Intelligence technologies to undermine the threats posed by its possible use for harmful purposes.

7. As Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, South Africa appreciates the active participation of Excellencies and delegates from a cross-section of States Parties in the meetings where important information on the activities of and best practices established by fraternal organisations is shared, as well as the identification of opportunities to strengthen collaboration. In particular, we are much encouraged by the concerted focus by States Parties on the technical aspects of the Working Group's mandate, which we hope will permeate throughout the work of the organisation.
8. In addition to the plans to host further Table-Top Exercises at regional level in order to build the capacity of States Parties and to identify complementarities, we are much encouraged by the commitment of the Technical Secretariat to mobilise funding support for CHEMEX AFRICA II and CHEMEX GRULAC I to continue improving the state of readiness of State Parties to respond to chemical incidents. We encourage States Parties with the necessary means to make voluntary contributions towards the achievement of this noble goal.
9. While the threats of chemical weapons use are real, there is a need to exercise caution not to overstate the threat to avoid the unintended consequence of making their acquisition more attractive to potential possessors. Therefore, the national export controls arrangements derived from the obligations in Article I (a) and (d) place the onus on all States Parties to ensure not only that all activities within their jurisdiction or control are compliant with the CWC, but also that all transfers of relevant materials or equipment from their jurisdiction prevent breach of the Convention throughout the trade value chain.
10. Regarding the foregoing, South Africa supports efforts seeking to continue to focus on ensuring that unwarranted restrictions are not imposed on developing countries to enable them access to materials, equipment and technologies required for their own development. Furthermore, the implementation of Article XI must not curtail economic and technological development of chemicals for peaceful uses and impose restrictions of access to equipment and materials to the disadvantage of developing countries.

11. The legacies of chemical weapons programmes of the past still require urgent attention. The Chemical Weapons Convention enjoins States Parties, with the support of the OPCW, to deal with old and abandoned chemical weapons the existence of which is known, including making new discoveries of such weapons wherever they may exist. Invariably, intentional and effective action by affected States Parties will enhance norms and values within the organisation.
12. The universality of the CWC, if achieved, would strengthen the role of the OPCW, as any territory that falls outside the jurisdiction of the CWC represents a potential limitation to its effectiveness. The CWC, like all international treaties, embodies the characteristics of the era in which it was negotiated and agreed. However, the context within which the CWC operates has not remained static and contextual change has been rapid. Therefore, looking to the future of the CWC in the post-destruction era, it is going to be crucial to review the current approach the OPCW has employed over the past 28 years, since the CWC came into effect, to vigorously pursue its ratification by all Member States of the United Nations, signatories and non-signatories alike.
13. South Africa remains committed to the elimination of all chemical weapons and the full realisation of a world free of chemical weapons as one of its key foreign policy objectives. South Africa endeavours to contribute to international security and stability, promote the benefits that disarmament and non-proliferation hold in store for international peace and security.

Chairperson

In closing, we would like to request that this statement be recorded as an official document of this Session and published on catalyst and the external server of the OPCW.