

STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA
ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS
CONVENTION

TO THE SEVENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (EC-77) OF THE OPCW

THE HAGUE, THE NETHERLANDS, 07 OCTOBER 2014

Mr. Chairperson,

1. On behalf of the African Group, I would like to welcome you back to the Chair of the Seventy-Seventh Session of the Executive Council (EC-77). We look forward to working closely with you in ensuring that the Council gives substantive consideration to the issues before it and we are confident that you will steer the deliberations of this session to a successful conclusion.
2. We thank the Director-General (DG), H.E. Ambassador Ahmet Uzumcu for his comprehensive report and consistent efforts to promote the work of our Organization. We also wish to recognize the professional support offered to him and to all States Parties by the Technical Secretariat.
3. The African Group wishes to associate itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the States Parties of the Non-Aligned Movement and China by H. E. Ambassador Alireza Jahangiri of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Chairperson,

4. The African Group would like to reiterate its principled positions made in previous Conference of States Parties (CSP) and Executive Council (EC) Sessions regarding the most important issues relating to the implementation of the Convention such as:
 - i. The national implementation measures in accordance with Article VII of the Convention;
 - ii. The implementation of Article X and its provisions relating to assistance and protection against chemical weapons;
 - iii. The implementation of agreed concrete measures and recommendations to ensure the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI;
 - iv. The role that the OPCW can play in the fight against terrorism;
 - v. The efforts towards universality of the Convention;
 - vi. The continued implementation of the Programme for Africa by the Technical Secretariat (TS);
 - vii. The need for equitable geographical and gender representation in the professional ranks of the Organisation, particularly in the senior and management cadres; and
 - viii. The future role/priorities of the Organization

We will articulate on some of these important matters later in this statement and the African Permanent Representations will intervene on specific agenda items on these important matters.

Mr. Chairperson,

5. The African Group wishes to reiterate its long-standing principled position on the existence of weapons of mass destruction which continues to pose a threat to international peace and security. Consequently, the African Group maintains its view that the Organization's focus should remain on complete disarmament and elimination of all chemical weapons under strict and effective international control, in accordance with the Convention.
6. In this regard, the African Group wishes to stress that the total destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles, old chemical weapons and abandoned chemical weapons, is a fundamental pillar of

the Convention. We therefore strongly call upon all possessor States Parties of all categories of chemical weapons to strictly comply with this fundamental pillar and the relevant decisions of the OPCW policy-making organs (PMOs), in order to achieve their complete destruction in the shortest time possible in accordance with the verification regime of the Convention.

Mr Chairperson,

7. With regard to the elimination and destruction of chemical weapons in Syria, we note the significant progress achieved. We also note the progress made by the commercial facilities in the designated States Parties for the destruction of Syrian chemical materials and equipments. We recognize the efforts of the international community towards the speedy destruction of Syrian chemical weapons.
8. We further take note of the progress in relation to the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs). We welcome the tripartite agreement signed by OPCW, UNOPS and the Syrian Arab Republic and the conclusion of the contribution agreement as a result of ongoing consultations that have been taking place on this matter. We hope that the contracts with individual companies that will do the work will be finalized shortly. We remain hopeful that these developments will result in the acceleration of efforts towards the destruction of the CWPFs at the earliest time possible.
9. With regard to the Second report of the fact-finding mission (FFM), the African Group takes note of the reservations, diverse views and interpretations expressed by States Parties during the Forty-Fifth Meeting of the Executive Council on the report. However, the African Group unequivocally condemns the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals as a weapon anywhere by anyone and under any circumstances as no cause could ever justify it. In this regard we continue to look forward to a definite report on the investigation into the incident of alleged use of toxic chemicals in Syria.

Mr. Chairperson,

10. We remain committed to meeting all our obligations in full by implementing our national obligations under the Convention and we continue to do all we can within our abilities to make progress on our national implementation measures. In this regard we appreciate the efforts of the Technical Secretariat in assisting States Parties to enhance their national implementation measures. We urge the Technical Secretariat to continue with its activities and programmes aimed at advancing Article VII implementation. Furthermore, we continue to urge the Organization to assist States Parties to develop their chemical industrial capacities for peaceful purposes. We believe doing so will stimulate their interest in the Chemical Weapons Convention and significantly enhance their ability to contribute to the maintenance of regional and international peace and security. The African Group agrees that some focused efforts are necessary to achieve the implementation of Article VII and we support the ongoing discussions in this regard in the context of existing traditional framework of Article VII facilitation. We therefore look forward to the appointment of the new facilitator for Article VII.

Mr Chairperson,

11. The African Group of States Parties welcomes the continued implementation of the Programme for Africa by the Technical Secretariat. In this regard we look forward to continued cooperation with the Technical Secretariat in the work that they have undertaken and are planning, to strengthen the Programme by developing new actions and projects.

Mr. Chairperson,

12. The African States Parties attach great value to the implementation of Article X, which provides for assistance and protection to States Parties against use and threat of use of chemical weapons

and toxic chemicals. We believe it is important to ensure practical capacity building as well as transfer of materials and equipment to deal with chemical incidents on a regional and sub-regional basis. The movement of chemicals across borders also calls for collective efforts of States Parties and a responsive Organization that is able to address a wide range of chemical-related incidents. We also take note of the activities of the OPCW on assistance and protection against the use and threat of use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals, and we commend the Technical Secretariat for its activities and programmes in this regard. We further call on the Organization to keep States Parties updated on the status of its readiness to assist States Parties during incidents related to the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals. We further look forward to the ongoing work in the facilitation of Article X.

13. The African Group recalls the flexibility demonstrated by States Parties during the informal consultations held on Article XI in the intersessional period ahead of the Sixty-Sixth Session of the Executive Council regarding the development of a document incorporating new elements to ensure full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI. During that informal consultation issues of interest to various States Parties were deliberated in an open and constructive manner. We take note of the Facilitator's Informal Document which includes the elements of the action plan proposed by the Non-Aligned Movement CWC States Parties and China to the Third Review Conference, the relevant decision taken at the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, the recommendations of the Third Review Conference and the inputs from workshops/seminars held on Article XI. Much work is yet to be done, but the African Group remains optimistic of an early positive outcome. The African Group calls upon States Parties to consider the OPCW Technical Secretariat's evaluations of the concluded activities on Article XI in its future deliberations. We look forward to the appointment of the new facilitator for Article XI.

Mr. Chairperson,

14. The African Group wishes to reiterate one of the resolutions from the Third Review Conference, that the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of all Articles of the Convention makes a major contribution to international peace and security. We therefore reiterate our calls for adequate funding of all the Organization's activities and programmes under various Articles of the Convention, through the regular budget.
15. With regard to the proposed Programme and Budget of the Organization for 2015, the African Group wishes to commend the facilitators for the good work they have done. The Group would also like to commend the Technical Secretariat for the revisions that have been incorporated in the proposed programme and budget in response to concerns, requests and comments that were made by the States Parties during consultations. We would also like to commend States Parties for their constructive participation during the programme and budget discussions. We look forward to this Session's recommendation of the proposed programme and budget to the upcoming Conference of States Parties.

Mr. Chairperson,

16. I thank you Mr Chairperson, and would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Seventy-Seventh Session of the Executive Council and be placed on the Extranet.