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**Executive Council**

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**SOUTH AFRICA**

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP  
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR VUSI BRUCE KOLOANE  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE OPCW AT THE  
SEVENTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

The African Group of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention would like to welcome you back to the Chair of the Executive Council. We look forward to working closely with you in ensuring that the Council gives substantive consideration to the issues before it and bring them to a successful conclusion.

The African Group of States Parties associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and China by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, H. E. Ambassador Alireza Jahangiri.

The Group has also taken note of the opening statement by the Director-General, H.E. Ambassador Ahmet Uzümcü on the activities of the Organisation and the reports of the Council by the Vice-Chairpersons on the work that they have undertaken since the last meeting of the Executive Council.

We would like to reiterate the Africa Group's positions on the following, amongst other issues:

1. Universality of the Convention;
2. The continued implementation of the Programme for Africa by the Technical Secretariat;
3. The need for equitable geographical and gender representation in the professional ranks of the Organisation, particularly in its senior and management cadres; and
4. The future role or priorities of the Organisation.

The African Group is pleased to see the progress that has been achieved by this Executive Council in addressing issues relevant to the implementation of the Convention and the decisions of the policy-making organs (PMOs). The successes of this Executive Council and the outcomes of its meetings ensure that the integrity of the Organisation is upheld and its credibility is maintained. We also wish to extend our compliments to the Bureau, the



facilitators and the Technical Secretariat as they diligently ensure successful coordination of the various areas of implementation of the Convention. We hope to see sustained efforts by members of the Executive Council to consolidate and forge deeper cooperation and understanding with a view to maintain the spirit of unity in the Executive Council.

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 Organisation's focus should remain on complete disarmament and elimination of all chemical weapons under strict and effective international control, in accordance with the Convention.

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 in order to achieve their complete destruction in the shortest time possible, in accordance with the verification regime of the Convention and the relevant decisions of the OPCW policy-making organs (PMOs).

With regard to the elimination and destruction of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, we recognise the significant progress achieved. We also welcome the progress made in relation to the destruction of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs).

We also take note of the decision adopted by the Executive Council during its Forty-Eighth Meeting held on 4 February 2015 in relation to the reports of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM).

Having received the reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic on which a number of delegations expressed diverse views and mindful of the decision adopted at the Forty-Eighth Meeting of the Executive Council by a voting procedure, we recall the importance of the OPCW traditional practice of consensus. We strongly encourage all States Parties to continue to work constructively in search of a consensus-based approach in keeping with the long established successful practice of the OPCW in dealing with the challenges the Organisation confronts.

We acknowledge the necessity for all States Parties to fully meet their obligations under Article VII of the Convention. We recognise a need for a comprehensive approach to national implementation in line with each State Party's national constitutional requirements that are consistent with the Convention. We also believe a one-size-fits-all approach will not be productive as States Parties' needs differ, hence we support tailor-made approaches to States Parties. In this regard, the African Group looks forward to working together with all stakeholders involved in the promotion of implementation of Article VII and the entire Convention and will participate actively and constructively in discussions related to best approaches aimed at the full implementation of this aspect of the Convention.

Under Article X, the African States Parties attach great value to the implementation of this Article, 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. We also call on the Organisation 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 reiterate our principled position expressed in our previous statements on the unequivocal condemnation of the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals anywhere by anyone and under any circumstances

Under Article XI, the African Group looks forward to constructively engaging with other States Parties in consultations on the full implementation of the agreed measures as contained in the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties' decision and the development of additional measures that will ensure full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI.

In this context, 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.

The African Group commends the excellent work of the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T), H.E. Dr (Mrs) N. N. Akanbi OON, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. We believe the discussions taking place under her stewardship in informal consultations in the OEWG will result in practical outcomes that will enable the Organisation to contribute meaningfully to the global efforts to combat terrorism.

The African Group welcomes the commemoration of the centenary of the first large-scale use of chemical weapons to be held on 21 April 2015 in Ieper, Belgium. We take this opportunity to commend the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat for this initiative and for the work undertaken to make it a success. In this context, while honouring the memory of all the victims of the first large-scale use of chemical weapons, we would like to pay tribute to fallen African soldiers who perished during WW1.

In conclusion Mr Chairperson, the African Group takes this opportunity to congratulate your excellent leadership as Chairperson of the Executive Council. Your professional and diplomatic skills contributed greatly to the successful work achieved by the Executive Council during your tenure, and for that we commend you.

I thank you, and we would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Seventy-Eighth Session of the Executive Council.

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