



OPCW

Executive Council

Eighty-Fifth Session
11 – 14 July 2017

EC-85/NAT.22
11 July 2017
ENGLISH only

SOUTH AFRICA

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP OF STATES PARTIES TO
THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION DELIVERED BY
H.E. AMBASSADOR VUSI BRUCE KOLOANE, ACTING COORDINATOR AND
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE
OPCW AT THE EIGHTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

I would like to welcome H.E. Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal of Bangladesh, as Chairperson of the Executive Council and express our confidence in your able leadership to steer the sessions of the Council during your chairmanship to successful conclusions. We also wish to take this opportunity to appreciate H.E. Ambassador Odette Melono of Cameroon for all her dedicated efforts during her chairmanship of the Council.

In addition, the African Group associates itself with the Statement of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and China, which was delivered by the Group's Coordinator, H.E. Ambassador Haifa Aissami Madah, the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the OPCW.

The African Group wishes to express its gratitude to the Director-General, H. E. Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, for his informative and comprehensive report delivered in this Session. The Group appreciates his continuous efforts and those of his team in the Technical Secretariat, in promoting the role of the Organisation in the international disarmament regime and ably carrying out its functions under the Convention.

As the Organisation celebrates its twentieth anniversary this year, it is important to point out that almost all African countries are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The near-universal intake and absorption of the Convention continues to demonstrate the commitment and the great importance that the African continent attaches to a world free of chemical weapons.

In this regard, we welcome and strongly support the decision to establish the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention and further welcome the decision of the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the State Parties,



C-21/5 of 2 December 2016, on the continuation of this Programme. Algeria are to send additional comment.

We believe that it is pertinent to have a follow-up plan to achieve the concrete purposes mentioned in this document such as, the need to have designated laboratories in the African continent.

In addition, the African Group notes with much appreciation that the Fourth Phase of the Africa Programme began on 1 January 2017, for another three-year period. We urge that the Programme be backed by regular budgetary allocations and voluntary funding so as to ensure predictability and sustainability of the Programme. We also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all the voluntary contributors.

Equally, the African Group emphasises continued support of the OPCW in the area of sensitisation, especially for decision-makers, through the Technical Secretariat's special programs under Article VII with the view to simplify and fast track the process of domestication of the Convention.

On the destruction of the rest of chemical weapons stockpile, the African Group reiterates its long-standing principled position towards the achievement of complete disarmament in line with the Convention and the PMO's decision, under strict and effective international control.

In this regard, we encourage possessor States Parties to continue making efforts towards meeting their timeline for the complete destruction of their Chemical Weapon stockpiles.

The African Group also commends the achievements made in relation to the process of destruction of the remaining Category II chemical weapons in Libya, in line with the obligations pursuant to the Convention.

The African Group welcomes the completion of destruction of the remaining chemical weapons in Syria, and expresses its satisfaction concerning the destruction of all stockpiles and facilities in this State Party.

We also take note of the last report of the Fact Finding Mission (FFM) related to the incidents in Khan Shaykhun, as well Um Housh in which the experts confirmed the use of Sarin and Sulphur Mustard as chemical agents.

In this context, the African Group considers that the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals, as a weapon, anywhere by anyone and under any circumstances is reprehensible and completely contrary to the provisions of the Convention and all norms of international law.

We encourage the continued cooperation of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Technical Secretariat on the implementation of the relevant Executive Council decisions.

On International Cooperation, the African Group attaches great importance to the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all provisions of Article XI and emphasise the need to speed up efforts in this regard. Therefore, the Group welcomes the efforts being made by the Technical Secretariat to enhance the implementation of Article XI, as demonstrated by the review and evaluation workshop on the components of an agreed

framework for the full implementation of Article XI. We hope that this workshop will be an annual event in order to give the necessary impetuosity for the full and effective implementation of Article XI. This workshop should contribute to finding appropriate and concrete results.

On education and outreach, the African Group recognises the importance of the programmes in achieving the main objectives of the Convention. The Group welcomes the work done by the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach, including all regional meetings held to contribute in formulating recommendations on education and outreach. The African Group views this programme as an essential component in the way of enhancing and developing a culture of implementation of the Convention, through cooperation with the sub-regional organisations and the African Union.

The African Group commends the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities, under the co-chairmanship of H.E. Vusi Bruce Koloane of South Africa and H.E. Sabine Nölke of Canada, to discuss and formulate recommendations on the future priorities of the OPCW for consideration at the Fourth Review Conference. We stress the importance of this working group and encourage it to continue its work in the spirit of consultations, consensus, ownership, taking into account the specific needs and concerns of the African Continent.

On the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, the African Group commends the work being done by the chairperson, H.E. Dr Momar Diop of Senegal and the chairperson of the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors, H.E. María Teresa Infante of Chile, especially on matters of inter-agency cooperation.

In this context, the African Group reiterates its call upon the OPCW to continue its engagement with the African Union and other regional groups, taking into account the realities of the various States Parties.

To conclude, the African Group believes that the appointment process of the new Director-General should be fair, open and transparent in order to ensure broader support for the new Director-General. The African Group recommends the establishment of clear rules of procedure for the future to this important process, similar to the practices of other international organisations. This should also take into account fair regional representation.

Mr Chairperson, the African Group wishes to extend its gratitude to you for expertly leading our activities during Your Excellency's mandate. I thank you for your attention.

- - - 0 - - -