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MOROCCO

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP OF STATES PARTIES TO
THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ABDELOUAHAB BELLOUKI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MOROCCO TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

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

First, I would like to welcome back H.E. Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal of Bangladesh, as Chairperson of the Executive Council and express our confidence in his able leadership to steer the sessions of the Council to successful conclusions.

In addition, the African Group associates itself with the Statement of the 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 also 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.

In the context of the 20th Anniversary of our Organisation, it is important to point out the near-universal intake and absorption of the Chemical Weapons Convention in the African continent. This is a reflection of the continent's commitment 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 States Parties, C-21/5, dated 2 December 2016, on the continuation of this Programme.

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 anchored by the regular budget so as to ensure its predictability and



sustainability. We also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all the voluntary contributors.

We believe that it is pertinent to have a follow-up plan to achieve the concrete purposes indicated in the Director-General's Note of 27 February 2017. In this context, we appreciate the pragmatic approach adopted by the Director-General to enhance the African Programme, as mentioned in the Note of 12 September 2017 (EC-86/DG.18).

Equally, the African Group emphasises continued support of the OPCW in the area of sensitisation, especially for decision makers and regional bodies, such as the Regional Economic Communities and the African Union, through the various Technical Secretariat's special programmes.

The African Group notes and welcomes the proposal for updating the OPCW Laboratory and is confident that this move will assist with capacity building, particularly for regions without any designated laboratories. We look forward to receiving an update from the Technical Secretariat on this project.

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

The African Group welcomes the recent statement on 27 September, made by the Director-General marking the completion of the full destruction of the chemical weapons stockpile possessed by the Russian Federation, under OPCW verification.

In addition, we take this opportunity to encourage possessor States Parties to respect the timelines for the complete destruction of their stockpiles.

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

We highlight the importance of the continuous dialogue between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Technical Secretariat and we look forward to positive outcomes of this cooperation. Furthermore, we encourage the two parties to continue the implementation of the relevant Executive Council decisions.

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 way of enhancing and developing a culture of implementation of the Convention, through cooperation with the African Union and the sub-regional organisations.

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 and ownership, taking into account the specific needs and concerns of the African Continent.

On the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, the 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. In this context, we appreciate the contribution of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism and we express our gratitude to its Director, Professor Larry Gbevlo-Lartey, for his comprehensive presentation on this matter. This kind of contribution from the African Union could help enrich the Group's interactions with the OPCW, taking into account the realities of the various regions.

We express our regrets with the non-adoption of the report of the Eighty-Fifth Session of the Executive Council due to lack of consensus on only one issue. Therefore, we urge the members of the Council to work cooperatively to achieve consensus and adopt the report of the present session, as it is a tradition of the Organisation.

We welcome the consensus regarding the Organisation's budget and we commend the outstanding work done by the two co-facilitators, Mr Gerhard Eisl of Austria and Mr Bahram Jamali of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

To conclude, the African Group believes that the appointment process of the new Director-General has been fair, open and transparent, and we welcome the emerging consensus around the candidate of Spain, H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias. Furthermore, we commend the other six candidates for allowing this consensus to prevail and further salute the Executive Council Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Belal, for his outstanding performance in facilitating the nomination process.

Regarding this important process, the Group recommends the establishment of clear rules of procedure for the future, similar to the practices of other international organisations. This should also take into account fair regional representation and gender mainstreaming.

Mr Chairperson, the African Group wishes to extend its gratitude to you for expertly leading our activities during this special phase of our Organisation.

I thank you for your attention.

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